

# Her Wings

Frances Newton Symmes Allen

The Riverside Press Cambridge  
REFERENCE LIBRARY

---

DATE

TITLE\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

AUTHOR\_\_\_\_\_

EDITION\_\_\_\_\_SERIES\_\_\_\_\_

TYPE\_\_\_\_\_PLATES\_\_\_\_\_

PAPER\_\_\_\_\_

*Method of  
Printing*

{ TEXT\_\_\_\_\_

{ INSERTS\_\_\_\_\_

COVER\_\_\_\_\_

SUBCONTRACT DATA\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

REFERENCE LIBRARY \* HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. \* BOSTON, MASS.

*Archive  
Collection*



\* \*  
This book may not leave the Offices  
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days







By Frances D. S. Allen

---

HER WINGS  
THE PLAIN PATH  
THE INVADERS

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

## HER WINGS



---

---

# HER WINGS

BY

FRANCES NEWTON SYMMES ALLEN

---

---



---

---

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

1914

---

---

COPYRIGHT, 1914, BY FRANCES NEWTON SYMMES ALLEN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

*Published September 1914*

TO  
MY HUSBAND





## CONTENTS

I. IN WHICH THE HERO MEETS THE OTHER HERO	1
II. IN WHICH, A GOOD MANY YEARS AFTER THE HEROES MEET, THE HEROINE LIFTS HER VEIL	13
III. IN WHICH THE HEROINE DUSTS MAHOGANY AND ANALYZES HER FEMINISM AND FAILS TO REC- OGNIZE A HERO . . . . .	26
IV. IN WHICH ONE HERO JINGLES CHANGE CON- TENTEDLY AND GETS IN RANGE OF THE HEAD- LIGHTS . . . . .	43
V. IN WHICH A HERO IS PROUD OF HIS SURGERY BUT IS HUMBLLED FROM HIS HIGH ESTATE BY THE ELOQUENCE OF A FEMINIST . . . .	53
VI. IN WHICH THERE ARE FLOWERS AND LITTLE CHILDREN AND FRESH BREAD, AND, FOR ONE HERO, A FIRST WOMAN . . . . .	68
VII. IN WHICH FEMINISM IS MADE DELICATELY PAL- ATABLE, AND FEMINISTS DO THE TURKEY TROT . . . . .	85
VIII. IN WHICH THERE ARE A KITTEN, OTHER HELP- LESS, NAMELESS YOUNG CREATURES, REMI- NISCENCES OF A GREAT MAN, AND ALMOST SOME LOVE-MAKING . . . . .	99

IX. IN WHICH ONE HERO PONDERES CLOTHES AND THE MAN, AND THE TWO HEROES DIFFER DIAMETRICALLY AS TO THE CAPTAINCY OF THE SOUL . . . . .	116
X. IN WHICH HEROES AND HEROINES REST AND TWO UNDERSTUDIES WALK THE BOARDS MERRILY . . . . .	127
XI. IN WHICH A HERO TELLS A STORY THAT STARTS THE ECHOES, AND THE FIRST WOMAN PLAYS ON AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS ALL OUT OF TUNE . . . . .	140
XII. IN WHICH FORLORN PEOPLE ARE GIVEN WHAT THEY WANT, NOT WHAT THEY NEED, BUT THE HEROINE GIVES A HERO NOTHING .	159
XIII. IN WHICH MEET HEROES, HEROINE, JUST A WOMAN, AND MANY UNDERCURRENTS .	177
XIV. IN WHICH THE HEROINE DECLARES FIRST LOVE A FALLACY, AND ONE HERO IS GLAD .	192
XV. IN WHICH THE HEROINE HAS NO PART, BUT A HERO AGAIN ASKS QUESTIONS . . .	205
XVI. IN WHICH MISS PENROSE TALKS FASHIONS AND USES DISCERNING EYES, AND THE HEROINE IS UNCOMPROMISING . . .	221
XVII. IN WHICH A HERO SMELLS THE UPLUMBED, SALT, ESTRANGING SEA, BUT HEARS ECHOES ACROSS THE STRAITS . . . . .	237

# CONTENTS

ix

- XVIII. IN WHICH THE MELTING-POT BOILS, AND A  
KISS BURNS, AND THE HEROINE FEARS THAT  
HER WINGS ARE SINGED . . . . . 255
- XIX. IN WHICH ONE HERO IS RIGID IN THE ETI-  
QUETTE OF VISIONS, THE OTHER FINDS  
SOME MONEY LYING IDLE, AND THE HERO-  
INE FINDS LOOPHOLES IN LOGIC . . . . . 271
- XX. IN WHICH MISS PENROSE TALKS OF TROUT  
AND FISHERMEN, AND A HERO HEARS SOME  
THINGS AND REMEMBERS OTHERS . . . . . 289
- XXI. IN WHICH ONE QUESTION IS ANSWERED FOR  
ONE HERO, AND, FOR THE OTHER HERO, AN  
OLD QUESTION SEEMS NEVER TO BE AN-  
SWERED . . . . . 302
- XXII. IN WHICH THERE IS A LOGICAL BABY AT A  
CHEERFUL EXPERIMENT STATION, WHERE  
SOME PROBLEMS ARE ALMOST SOLVED . . . . . 318
- XXIII. IN WHICH THERE IS A SOUNDLESS FIGHT IN  
THE DARK, AND THEN UNSAID THINGS ARE  
WRITTEN IN WATER . . . . . 333
- XXIV. IN WHICH SEBASTIAN SAYS LUMINOUS THINGS  
THAT MAKE A GREAT SHINING IN A DARK  
PLACE, AND JUST A WOMAN SETTLES THE  
QUESTION . . . . . 351



# HER WINGS

## CHAPTER I

### IN WHICH THE HERO MEETS THE OTHER HERO

"WANT a lift?" said the boy on the milk cart, pulling up the bay horse with a jerk and a rattle of cans.

"Bet I do!" cried the sturdy, tramping boy in the fisherman's high boots and brown leather coat, with the split bamboo pole and the trout basket over his shoulder. "Thanks!" he added, as he swung himself up. "Did n't know I was tired till now."

"Get any?" said the other, with a shy looking-away at the horse's ears, as the reins slackened, and they trotted on.

"Three — mites. I'll give 'em to a girl's cat next door. The brooks are too high. But flowers! Gee! My basket's full—for my mother. Such trilliums! 'Trillia,' I suppose I should say, according to Professor Pollux. This is better than walking, isn't it!"

"Likely 't is. I don't walk much, 'cept for cows and in seedin' time. Then it's work, not walkin'."

"That's so! It is different! I never thought," laughed the fisherman, taking off his cap to give the breeze a chance at his moist, close-cut, yellow hair with its unwelcome curliness. "You a farmer?" And

he turned and looked quite directly at the boy, who did not look at him, but kept his eyes ahead on the horse and the curve of the grassy wood road under the fresh-leaved birches.

"I—I work for a farmer," he hesitated, a slow color tinging his brown neck in the collarless, open cottonade shirt, and creeping up into his lean brown cheeks.

"Whew! But you're clever to—to support yourself," the other exclaimed. "You make me feel like a kid. And we're about the same age, I'll bet. I'm seventeen in August."

The faint color deepened again, and the brown, big-wristed hands in the rolled-up sleeves gave the reins a jerk.

"About—about the same," he said unsmilingly.

It was nearly eleven o'clock of a day in early June. Back in the woods the laurel was like snow; and the modest crimson of wild strawberries and the blue-white of quaker-ladies broidered the green of young ferns along the roadside. Presently the wood road would merge itself into a meadow road among drifts of laurel too pink for any earthly snow; and then, after splashing through a brook, lose itself in the white state road near the railway station. There was a leisurely train at 11.30 that landed milk cans and country shoppers in the near-by young city, at noon sharp.

The fisherman stopped his interested scanning of the lanky, brown-eyed boy with the stubborn cow-

lick, and wondered what made him shy off so about his age.

"My name's Howard Craig," he said abruptly. "What's yours?"

The other did n't shy off there. Instead, he shied on Howard a quite direct and quite friendly glance.

"Will Leaf," he said unhesitatingly.

"Really!" Was he shying off again, and making up that quite impossible name?

Again the color rose above the open neck of the limp blue shirt.

"Why not!" he exclaimed quickly. "It's good enough fer me, anyhow."

Craig colored, too.

"Why, of course it's — it's good enough for anybody," he cried heartily. "I beg your pardon for being fresh. But it's — it's such a right name for you. And names don't always fit, you know. Rose Sweet, say, for an old maid Math. teacher. Had her in the Holton High School last year. Gee! but she was sour — and no rose, I tell you!"

He stopped, breathless with his apologies, and threw back his head in a laugh. "But your name just fits — that's why I seemed fresh."

Again the other shied on him that quick, friendly glance, almost like a bird's before it is frightened away.

"Skunk cabbage er terbacco?" he said, with a gleam of a smile. "Er catnip er wormwood? There's leaves an' leaves."



"Oh, none of those. Say, I'm not fooling! But I can't explain. Somehow — say, leaves like those and those and those. They're like your name." And he pointed with his bamboo pole up into the delicate intricacy of young birch and young oak and young maple and finally tasseling juniper, intervaled with blue sky.

The gleam of a smile had faded, but the dark eyes had not shied away.

"I never thought of my name 'cept ter answer to it fifty-'leven times a day," he said, reaching for the whip. "But your name's got the stuff in it."

"Mine was my father's," Craig said, with a proud briefness. "Was yours your father's?"

Leaf gave the bay a cut that sent them flying out into the open of the meadow with a lively clatter of cans.

"Naw, it was n't," he answered, almost roughly. "This here goldderned horse! You'd think 't was a funeral 'stid of a train ter ketch." This time the flooding color was deep and well up into the roughened dark hair.

Craig had caught the back of the seat to steady himself as they flew down among laurel clumps and young mulleins and columbines. Leaf's knuckles were white as he strained at the lines. What had made him shy off so roughly at just a simple question? Any fellow might ask such a question. It was no knock-down offense. Then they slowed up a little hill and over the crest, and the white knuckles relaxed into their usual brown, the high color cooled.



Out of the silence, Leaf turned to him timidly with his asking glance. "I can show ye some secret places fer trout," he said, "ef you'll come. I'll bet I know every trout and pickerel in these hills. An' I've got most Sundays t' myself an' no one'll ketch us."

Somehow, Craig's heart felt a quick pang. "Oh, thank you! I just wish I could. I'd lots rather fish than go to Europe. But, you see, I've got to—mother and I—a week from Saturday. Mother says I must get at least a glimpse of things before I go into Harvard next fall. But I'd much rather camp and tramp and live in the woods all summer."

"Next spring, will you?" A faint melancholy shadowed the eagerness of his glance.

They were downhill now, splashing through a brimming brook that, higher up, eddied around cowslip and watercress.

"Of course I will. I'd like nothing better if I'm anywhere around here. It's a long time to plan ahead. Sometime I will, sure."

"You've — you've a — a heap of things ahead of you, ain't you?" Leaf said presently, out of another little silence. He had looked away again, fitting the whip into the stand and letting the bay choose his own gait as they turned into the white state road. Not far ahead a silvery plume of steam and the hum of wheels came from the gristmill this side of the station.

"Gee! I should think I had! Mother keeps me on the jump, too. You see, that's the trouble in being

named for—for some one. You've just got to be things if he was. People are always at you. And I've got Harvard to do, and then the Harvard Med. Dad was a lawyer, a judge, but I can't go that dry stuff. Cutting things off and curing people, that's for me. But I'd like to let up once, just to see how it feels." And Craig ran his hand through the crinkly light hair he had not inherited from his father and frowned his smooth forehead into quite a mature wrinkle.

"It must cost a whole heap to—to be things," Leaf hesitated. "Same as paying out a lot for fertilizers, ain't it, to get your crop?"

"It does. It costs a fearful lot. But dad left it all for just that, mother says. So it's up to me."

They had trotted past the sawmill and were nearing the little red station with the purple petunias and the scarlet geraniums in the agent's window.

"You goin' to Holton?" Leaf asked, as a far whistle sounded above hoofs on macadam. "It's seven minutes yet. They're loadin' on strawberries at Jenkins's. I was to Holton once, when I came here, but I don't remember much."

Craig did some rapid reasoning. Holton was the only railway outlet for this region of trout brooks and hill pastures.

"Yes, I live there, but it isn't very interesting," he said kindly. "I'd trade you my life for yours any day." The question of the truth or untruth of this assertion was of no consequence when there was such a chance to be generous.

Leaf gave him another of his alluringly shy glances. "Not if you was to try it," he said, with a faint gleam of a smile. "There ain't nothin' ahead. An' you've got to be somethin'."

"But heaps of things in it—things to do and know about that townfolks never do get wise on."

In his pity and his generosity he would have declared that the lore of the farmer boy was more to be desired than all Harvard's degrees, had they not just then made a close landing at the station platform. The bay horse could have brought the milk cans to the train quite without any assistance from a driver.

Craig's right hand went into his right trousers pocket and crumpled a dollar bill in his fist. When he sprang lightly to the platform Leaf was already unloading his cans.

"Say, I'm awfully much obliged to you," he said heartily, holding out his hand. "And—and this—this is n't to pay for the lift. That's been too jolly and friendly—"

At first, after landing a can, Leaf had held out a wide-open brown palm with the friendliest and least timid of his glances. But at Craig's next words he jerked it back fiercely and tugged at another can, his face flushing dark.

"I don't want any er yer money," he cried roughly. "I ain't askin' ye fer anything, am I?"

The train rounded the curve below and whistled shrilly.

Craig had crimsoned, too. "Oh, I beg your par-

don," he stammered. "I did n't mean — Good-bye! I must get my ticket. You've been awfully kind."

But Leaf went on with his unloading and gave him no further glance. The train slowed down and brought the baggage car into line with the bay horse, whose ears did not betray the smallest surprise at the achievements of science, and with the tall boy in blue cottonade, among the milk cans.

"Hello, Leaf!" called the man in shirt sleeves with a pencil behind his ear, out of the car doorway. "Seen any lady-slippers?"

"Naw," said Leaf briefly, handing up a can.

Craig had got his ticket and stood hesitatingly on the steps of the Pullman. He was wondering what to say if he dared to go back and try to make it right. Somehow, he did n't want to go away and not make it right. He must decide quickly. There was only one more can to load on of Leaf's lot. The train bell rang. Leaf came running up the platform. His face was quite as white as any milk, and his breath came short. Craig feared the proud, thin line of his lips.

"Say," Leaf cried, with shrill distinctness, running along as the train began to move, "I ain't afraid to tell ye. I ain't tried to hide it. I don't mind yer airs. I'm — I'm a state ward. I — I" — the train was getting too fast for him — "I don't know nothin' — nothin' about my" — he was screaming shrilly now — "my father 'cept that he — was a mean coward." He fell back as the train swept by. Craig could see his white face as he stopped short where the platform

ended and stood there, with his bitter words on his lips.

That night, farmer Josiah Tibbetts sat in his stocking feet and shirt sleeves by the kitchen table, reading his weekly "Gazette." It was a hot night. A litter of dead moths lay around under the big lamp with the scrap of red flannel in its odorous kerosene. Now and then a white sheet of heat lightning flashed at the open door and revealed the flagstones, and the piled wood in the woodshed. A fitful little wind swayed the high flame into a smudge against the clear lamp chimney, and brought in faint sweetnesses from the woods, elder and wild grape and swamp honeysuckle; and heavy June bugs that bumped against Mrs. Tibbetts's shelves of pots and pans, and the green pump opposite the big brick oven. From the dark of the bedroom opening off the kitchen came a sound not unlike the June bug's labored buzzing as Mrs. Tibbetts slept off the weariness of much skimming of cream and churning of butter. More dreamful, surely, was the voice of the brook not far from the house, tuned high by a week of showers.

Presently, the lightning revealed more than doorway and woodshed. Leaf stood hesitating on the threshold. His face still held its whiteness of the morning. His eyes were large with the darkness out of which he had come. He leaned against the doorway, his hands in the pockets of his sagging trousers.

Mr. Tibbetts looked up over his glasses. The lamp



behind him made a curious halo of his stiff white hair, and shone red through his large ears.

"Hev ye put the calf to the cow and fixed up the bars?" he said, peering higher over his round spectacles. "Ain't sick, be ye?"

"Naw, I ain't sick. I jest been a-thinkin'," the boy drawled, staring at the lamp. "I've jest been a-wonderin'. How long sence I come here? That's what I been a-countin' up, and somehow I can't seem to git nowhere."

The old man put down his paper and drew his white stubbly beard through his fist reflectively.

"How long sence you come here? Almost forgot myself, it's been such a long spell. Mis' Tibbetts, she can tell ye in the mornin'."

"'Bout nine year, ain't it?" Leaf persisted. "Nine or ten year? An' I was about seven when I come. Seems I can remember feelin' about seven when I see the brook for the first time an' all the pigeons an' doves on the corn-house."

"Jest about seven, I calculate," Mr. Tibbetts agreed, again assisting memory with the slow drawing of his beard through his fist. "Fust thing I remember was your havin' two teeth out in front an' gittin' scared at that big Rhode Island red rooster, an' screamin' fit to kill. But Mis' Tibbetts, she c'n tell ye jest to a minute how long you been here. What ye want to know fer, anyhow? Somebody been med-dlin'?"

Leaf sat down on the doorstep and looked away

from the lamp out to where the lightning more and more frequently whitened the dark.

"Naw," he said slowly. "Nobody's been meddlin'. I been meddlin' myself. I been wonderin' how old I am an' — an' — about how long it's — it's got to last — an' — an' about nothin' bein' ahead."

Mr. Tibbetts yawned resonantly and squinted off his glasses.

"Mis' Tibbetts, she'll tell ye in the mornin'," he repeated. "She keeps it all written down on a paper in the Bible. But 'tain't wuth while ter worry. Ain't I allus been square with ye?"

Leaf's chin was propped in his hands. His back was turned to the lamp. It was an attitude that asked for a mother's hand on the bent head with the roughened dark hair and for an arm around the thin young shoulders.

"Yes, you've allus been square," he said. "I ain't complainin'. I'm jest a-lookin' at things. An' — an' — an' somehow it don't jest look like it's a square deal — livin'."

Mr. Tibbetts hung his vest over the back of the chair, and began to wind his fat old silver watch.

"It ain't square to — to jest start people livin' without askin' if they've a min' to, an' then givin' 'em no show," Leaf muttered on.

The old man held his watch to his ear for a long minute. The lightning flashed white into the dark of the shed and around the boy on the doorstep.

"Naw, it ain't a square deal," Mr. Tibbetts said

slowly. "Ye're jest right there. The Lord knows it ain't a square deal." He had gone to the door and stood with one hard old hand on the boy's shoulder. Then, after a little silence broken only by the voice of the brook, "Looks a heap like rain, don't it? I never did see such a spell of rain. An' Mis' Tibbetts she left a big cut er apple-custard pie in the pantry. It'll set all right on your young stomach."



## CHAPTER II

IN WHICH, A GOOD MANY YEARS AFTER THE  
HEROES MEET, THE HEROINE LIFTS HER VEIL

THE little boy was getting very tired of the magazines on the table in Dr. Craig's waiting-room. There was a faint bluish shadow under his heavy dark eyes.

"Don't tear, dearie! Don't tear," his mother whispered, as he leaned his head limply against her mussed linen waist and jerked petulantly at the ragged pages of a "Munsey."

Georgia Frame, in her clinging black gown and crisp new mourning-veil, felt as petulant as the child. From the wide viewpoint of her grief, it seemed to her that she could see with clairvoyant distinctness into all possible kinds of dissatisfaction. She understood fully the impulse of those small, nervous fingers to jerk and tear the pages. That was exactly her own impulse toward life—to jerk and tear out all the pages and then throw the cover away. Poor little chap! He was beginning early. She put down the "Literary Digest," which she had been trying to read, and leaned across the table.

"Do let him!" she said, with a smile that was quite spoiled as a smile by the sudden tears that brimmed her eyes. "Do let him tear it—one page, at least.

He'll feel a lot better, and the doctor won't mind. He'd say to let him."

The mother of the little boy smiled back at her out of round, clear, blue eyes, with a mouth as fresh and delicate as his own.

"But the principle," she protested. "They do get so spoiled when they're ill, and"—the smile fading and the mouth growing older—"little Joy has been ill so much, poor little soul!" and she drew him closer to her bosom. His eyes were gravely fixed on Georgia, and the "Munsey" had dropped from his fingers. "Ever since he was born, poor little soul! But now he's going to get well and strong," his mother murmured on, her mouth against his soft, pale-brown hair.

The door of the doctor's office opened. In his fresh white linen, he stood holding it ajar for a woman leading out a pallid, thin-legged little girl. The little girl's face was upturned to his quite confidingly.

"All night in the fresh air, Mrs. Burke," he was finishing heartily. "It'll make a new girl of her."

And from smiling down at the child, he looked up, across the room, over the heads of the dozen or so patients, and smiled at Georgia Frame. Then a uniformed nurse closed his door.

Georgia gave him but a wan response and colored faintly. Then she turned again to the little boy and his mother.

"He's tired waiting," she said softly. "I'm not in the least bit of a hurry. You take my turn and go

in next. Do, please! I have n't a thing to hurry for!"

"Oh, dear, no!" the other began. "He is not so very tired, are you, Joy, dear? And you are too—" She had put out her hand impulsively toward Georgia, her mouth young again in its smile.

Quite suddenly Georgia reddened in the shadow of her veil and caught the hand in both her own.

"Joy!" she exclaimed. "Joy? It all came in a flash — when you smiled and put out your hand. It can't be that you are Linda Joy — in college — years ago — that — that —"

The other's fair round face had crimsoned. She leaned forward eagerly. "That ran away and got married," she finished in a whisper. "Of course I am. And you — Somehow I felt I knew you the minute I saw you. But so much" — she dropped her eyes to the child — "so much has happened since then. And you are Georgia Frame. Of course I haven't forgotten. Why, I helped vote you in for class president." She drew her hand from Georgia's and smoothed the hair back from Joy's white forehead.

"Yes, everything has happened — since — to me," Georgia said, aware again of herself. "It's such ages ago. Nine years, isn't it? You look — almost just the same — except for this." And she smiled at little Joy whose delicately veined lids drooped to his white cheeks.

"He has two brothers and two sisters," his mother whispered on, now quite unsmiling and pale once more.

Georgia's hand went out again toward her. "And you — your husband," she began.

"Dead," the other said quite simply, lifting calm eyes. "Mr. Rush has been dead two years. And you —? You, too, have —"

"Mother died three weeks ago —" Georgia began.

The doctor's door opened again, this time wide enough to reveal him at his desk against an open window framing the yellowing top of a maple tree, the high roof of a new apartment building beyond, and above it the blue October sky. The nurse closed the door quickly and came toward Georgia.

"Your turn," she whispered.

When the little exchange of turns had been effected and Joy and his mother had been led away, Georgia sank back into herself with a sigh. Had it not been for Linda and the child and the strange reunion, she would have gone away then without the interview she had promised Dr. Craig, and, in a measure, promised her mother before the end had come. How many times during those last poignant weeks, when she and her mother were playing at hoping, and making-believe that the grim hospital was a summer resort, — how many times had she not promised that she would take good care of herself! And how many times had not her mother said, "Promise me that you will run in to see Howard and get him to give you a tonic." To her mother, Dr. Craig had been still just "Howard," the nice boy who had lived next door. And how many times she had said to him, looking

up from her white bed, with those ever-smiling eyes of hers, "And you will see that Georgia doesn't wear herself out with her work and her troublesome mother? You will look out for her." And Dr. Craig had promised. And when, last night, he had called her up on the telephone at Mrs. Pretty's, the dress-maker's, across the hall, and reminded her of her promise and ventured the guess that she was not taking care of herself, what was there to do but to say that she would come? But now, she would run away in a minute if it were not that she had come upon Linda Joy again. Linda Joy, of all people in the world! She had been the joke of the class, the pretty, easy-going Linda, who, in the very face of all the strenuous high-mindedness of her classmates, had thrown away her future and married a boy sweetheart. And — here she was — paying the fiddler! Little Joy was crying piteously now, there in the doctor's office, such a little wail of a cry! And in Georgia's memory, as vivid as his cry, was the old classroom at college, with Linda Joy in the red sweater, writing love letters under the cover of her English notebook, while Miss Sherrill lectured upon the "Greek Ideal in English Poetry." Poor, giddy little Linda! She certainly had sold her birthright without any bargaining!

Little Joy's crying had ceased. Presently the door opened and his mother came out with him in her arms. His small hand unclasped itself from Dr. Craig's fingers. Linda's cheeks were pink.



"Again to-morrow, please, Mrs. Rush," the doctor said gravely. He did not look at Georgia and smile.

Linda came over quickly and sank into her chair, holding the child close with one hand, with the other reaching for his little red coat and the white sailor hat stamped gallantly "S.S. Minnesota." She was biting trembling lips.

"He was so kind—so kind!" she whispered in little breaks. "But I know he thinks it's something serious. I know it! Mother's boy!" And she drew the elastic softly under Joy's chin.

Joy lifted large, puzzled eyes. "He's not a bad man, muvver! It did n't hurt," he said.

Linda beamed into his eyes. "No, darling! Mother knows he did n't hurt. He's a good, good man. Mother knows!" And she got up and drew a bulging shopping bag over her arm and held out her hand to meet the one Georgia had outstretched.

Georgia, too, had risen and thrown back her veil. "Oh, my dear! My dear! I'm so homesick for old times," she said, almost passionately. "It's so good to see you now—now—after all these years. And I know Joy will be all right. I'm sure of it. Dr. Craig is so fine and so—so tender. I know all about him. And you won't let me lose you again, will you, Linda? Now that I've found you after all these years! This city is so big and lonesome."

Linda paused in her going; little Joy stood weakly against her on the table. Her eyes still glistened, but her mouth was gay.

"Lose me! Of course not—if you want to keep me," she said. "I haven't amounted to a thing, Georgia. I'm a disgrace to the class. And you're so fine—with your wonderful teaching and your Woman's Suffrage speeches and everything. I read all about you in the papers. I'm just nothing. But then I have the children. Now, do come—if you don't change your mind after you think it over."

"I shall not change my mind," Georgia protested. "I will come—truly—if you will tell me where and when—"

Linda drew Joy up into her arms and started again.

"When? Any time! And, of course, I forgot you didn't know where. Why, a shabby old house at Russet Four Corners, on the Spring Road. Trolley to Russet Center and then ten minutes' walk over the fields. Anybody will tell you. And the children would love to meet—"

"Oh, I'll find the way if I may come." And then almost shyly she held out her hand to Joy, who, leaning a little wearily on his mother's shoulder, again regarded her gravely. "Good-bye, little man."

He let her take his hand. Then quite suddenly a very small smile like his mother's came into the corner of his mouth. "There are white rabbits," he said softly.

Linda laughed. "There! You'll have to come," she exclaimed. "That's a great honor,—for Joy to notice you. Good-bye!"

In the few minutes before her turn came, Georgia

did not return to "The Status of Women in Iceland," nor did she drop back into a drowning sense of the utter emptiness of her own life. In the very brief interval she was too amazed at the maternal in Linda, at the splendor of it in what had seemed to her — Georgia, and the rest of the class — close quarters. The perfect understanding between Linda and the child! Her "Mother knows"! And in college she had known nothing! And how she had held his frail little body into all the soft curves of her neck and arms and bosom! And twelve years before she had been a flyaway thing in a red Tam and a redder sweater, with the hairpins always dropping out of her loosened blond hair. A miracle had happened to Linda! Then, in a wayward, searing flash, the miracle associated itself with her own experience — the hospital a month before and with her holding her mother's frailness close, remembering the old promise, the promise that had made and moulded her life — to keep free, free, of woman's slavery, and to give full sweep to her wings.

The doctor's door opened wide. A small boy on crutches thumped out.

"Will you come, Miss Frame?" the nurse said.

Once within the room, with the door shut, nothing happened as she had been determined that it should happen. She had planned everything so as to get through the interview in a moment, perhaps to let him give her a prescription for a tonic or a bromide, — which she need n't take, — and then have their



---

association over and done with. It had to be so if she was ever going to get herself together again and take up her work. It was n't doctors and medicine she needed. Above all things, for every reason, it was n't Howard Craig. It was work.

But before he had even turned from his desk to greet her, she had let the whole situation get out of her hands as she sank down on the leather couch and began to shake with sobs. Her alert ear heard him walk a step or two away, but he said nothing. Suddenly the ticking of his desk clock grew more audible than he, and she felt the relief remembered from her little girlhood when her mother had said that crying would do her good. A motor horn blared up from the street and a trolley bell dinged. He took more steps and threw the window wide. The crisp air cooled the tears that had been so hot.

"How many times a day do you and Miss Pell have a meal of puffed rice?" he asked presently, with an utter casualness.

"Why, never!" she protested instantly out of the moist depths of her veil.

"Or Post-toasties? Or Grapenuts?"

She heard no smile, but she wiped her eyes and looked up. He was sitting on the window ledge with his hands in the pockets of his white linen coat, looking, just at that moment, not at all at her, but out over the tops of the maples. His straight, clear-cut profile was quite serious.

"Never!" she cried. "Both Theodosia and I loathe

them! Whatever made you think so?" And she sat up and threw back her veil and faced the fresh air.

"Because they come cooked," he said, facing her with that smile behind his glasses that reminded her of her mother's smile in answer to his. "It's pure logic. The new woman is too busy to cook. You and Miss Pell are new women. Therefore — but the inference is clear. And further, cooked food is more palatable than raw food —"

"Not fruit and lettuce and — and radishes," she interrupted, — "and nuts!"

He got up and came over opposite her, to the wheel chair at his desk. His laughter was hearty and unsparing of his firm, white teeth.

"You 've given the whole situation away," he said. "Mrs. Pretty aroused my suspicions yesterday when she happened in here with that anæmic girl of hers and mentioned casually that Miss Frame and Miss Pell had moved in across the hall, and that they were 'that handsome and seemin' strong an' not so much as a smitch of real solid food goin' in their back door.'"

"And that's how you found me?" she exclaimed. "I could n't guess. I was coming to see you — really I was."

"But when? You see Providence was on my side."

"Providence and — and mother!" she whispered.

"Yes — and your mother," he repeated. "And the old furniture has come and is getting to feel at home in the new places?"

Her face had paled again and saddened.

"Oh, no! But it's due to-day or to-morrow or next day. Freight is so slow."

"I must own to a longing to see some of it," he went on. "When I was a boy I liked going errands to your house, to get a chance to see the old spindle legs and claw feet. It was a premonition of my profession, I suppose. But you never liked my coming."

"That was strange, was n't it?" she said. "It was just as—as if I had the feeling that you would come to—to me in grief some time." Her dark eyes brimmed suddenly. "But I ought not to have been afraid—when—when you were to be so—so more than kind."

He reached for his prescription blanks. A color as quick and clear as a girl's had swept up to his crinkly blond hair.

"Any kindness, as you call it, will be more than amply returned if you will take this tonic," he ventured somewhat timidly, leaning quite professionally over his writing.

Contrary to his expectations, she made no rebellious answer—indeed, none at all. She was looking a little dreamily at his broad shoulders and bent head, and out of those old times he had brought back, she was remembering once, at least, when he had been warmly welcomed into her play.

"Of course, I did hate boys, always," she began irrelevantly, out of her remembering, just as he was writing directions for the taking of strychnia. "But

once I was delighted when you leaped over our fence. It was an afternoon in the spring — don't you remember the old lilac hedge between our back gardens? The cats used to hide there, and under the hollyhocks, from you. And that day you brought to Rhoderick Dhu, my cat, three little trout. Don't you remember?" Her clear olive face and the laughter in the depths of her eyes might all have belonged to the little girl of her remembering.

He wheeled around in his chair. "I guess I do!" he said. "And you were so gay and lively and fearless as long as Rhoderick Dhu was engaged with the fish, and you quite forgot your hatred of boys, and then suddenly, in a flash, you realized yourself and got shy, and ran away. And —"

"And then you went to Europe and to college and into big things — and now with us, everything has gone —"

"Don't!" He got up and held out the little white slip. "You must promise me, as your physician, to remember only the happy times. Be a sundial, please, and take this tonic."

"I will take the tonic," she laughed as she dropped her veil and rose. "And when the old home things are in their new places, you will be very welcome."

"When I have some little fish for Rhoderick Dhu, then I will dare leap over your fence," he broke in, taking the hand she held out.

He followed her to the door.

"Oh, a minute, please," she said. "I must ask you

---

about Mrs. Rush. We've just recognized each other after years and years. She was in my class at college and she ran away and married, poor little thing! And now it's quite wonderful, meeting her just at this time — when I've just come to this new, strange place. Somehow she and the little boy take hold of me."

"Mrs. Rush is quite wonderful herself — if she did desert the ranks," he answered, growing serious. "I'm glad you've met. Let her take hold of you."

"And the lovely little boy? Is he going to be much better?"

"Possibly, yes." He was frowning his wide, boyish brow into a deep line. "It's going to be a fight."

"But you'll win!" she said, as he held back the door. In all things but one, he deserved to win.

## CHAPTER III

IN WHICH THE HEROINE DUSTS MAHOGANY AND  
ANALYZES HER FEMINISM AND FAILS TO RECOGNIZE A HERO.

THEODOSIA had left behind her the unmistakable fragrance of her cigarette, yet, paradoxically, she had borne it away upon the severely plain, scant garments in which she clad her vigorous, athletic, uncorseted person, and in the heavy waves of red hair that she hid under her green Tyrolese hat pulled down close over her ears. Of course, the breeze of her swift walking down to Headquarters might dissipate some of its unmistakableness, and once within the Headquarters, who cared! Theodosia herself gave the matter no thought whatever as she strode along Main Street, saying over to herself the headings of her address upon "Celibacy and the Suffrage." Her one regret was that Georgia was n't rallying back into the work as rapidly as she had hoped she would. She had left her alone, sitting on a barrel marked "Glass — With Care," in a turmoil of newly arrived furniture and boxes, and dear knows how long she would continue sitting there! Theodosia was sure to find her with red eyes at supper-time. It would be a mercy for them both when the things were unpacked and disposed in their proper places. Then surely Georgia would get hold of herself once



more and be herself and accomplish something. After all, it was just as well not to have a near relative in the world and no more of a permanent home than the bank in which a thrifty grandfather had left you a dependable, if small, income. And Theodosia emphasized her thankful independence by giving the Headquarters door a bang as she let herself in.

Meanwhile, Georgia, in her black gown, still sat upon the barrel of glassware. It was impossible, it seemed to her, ever to do anything but sit there. On her return from Dr. Craig's, she had found the things all arriving, with Theodosia, in her blue kimono, leaning over the banisters, explaining to the men that they must rest on the landings, and Mrs. Pretty, in her open doorway, explaining that Miss Pell and Miss Frame surely could n't get a smitch of dinner in all that dirt an' trampin', an' that she an' Annamae had more than enough boiled dinner an' Annamae never no appetite nohow an' takin' a tonic. When the lifting and carrying was all over, even to the informal entrance of the Baby Steinway through the sashless window, Theodosia had been neighborly and had gone in to partake of Mrs. Pretty's odorous hospitality, and Georgia had shut herself into the silence of the bare yet crowded apartment. Silent it was, perhaps, of real voices and footfalls, but ringing to her with remembrance and unreality. Home—the old home of her whole, whole life—the home that had held the great love of her life, her mother—here, all that was left of it, in these strange little rooms in this

strange, unfamiliar city! And then presently Theodosia had come in with a plate of hot soup, declaring Georgia would kill herself and be unfit for school Monday, and Mrs. Pretty had followed with a cut of squash pie and an eye around on the furniture.

"Such old, unshiny-lookin' chairs an' tables I never see," Mrs. Pretty reported to Annamae, who was just rushing back to the mill. "An' her sittin' on that barrel slim like a weepin' willer tree in her black dress, sorter not knowin' which way to turn. Now, Annamae, if I was t' die, don't you go among strangers whatever."

"Don't talk about it anyhow, mommer," she broke in. "I've got t' skidoo. Say, 's my back all fastened? She 's swell in mourning, ain't she, that Miss Frame!" And Annamae jabbed a hatpin through her picture hat with the white willow plumes.

Miss Frame, meanwhile, had summoned resolution to put the squash pie into the pantry and look for a dust-cloth, and then, subconsciously, for an apron, in the third drawer of the old high-boy the expressmen had put into the dining-room. Then almost mechanically she went to work wiping off the dust and the bits of excelsior the men had left after their unpacking. The familiar mahogany center-table responded instantly with a soft glow, and the afternoon sun, shining in boldly through leafless maples and elms, made pools of light on the polish of the piano. She lifted the lid a moment and looked in at the silent keys. The last time they were struck, she was remem-



---

bering ! The last time ! And it was easy to roll the little claw-footed work-table into the space between the windows and put a chair here and a chair there, those dignified, aware old chairs that seemed so unreconciled to their new quarters ! And her mother's desk, the old mahogany, many-drawered and broad and deep ! The men had put it by chance into the very place, there by the south window, with a little glimpse of far-off mountains over roofs and chimneys. She rubbed back and forth, up and down the fine grain of the wood, and brought the fiddleback desk chair, and found the carved brass key among her many keys, and let down the broad lid. There it was as always — the half-fragrant, half-bitter smell of the wood ! She sank down on the chair and buried her face in her arms. This — this, she was saying to herself, was the supreme moment. Up to this very moment, from the beginning of school, when her mother had come on to see her established in her new position, all through the tragic weeks in the strange hospital, the finding of Howard Craig in the appointed physician, her mother's sudden, painless, smiling passing, all through the going back to Holton and the breaking up, there had been excitement, the going and coming of many, the considering of practical things, some great purpose, some unfaced fear to work toward. But now ! What was there now but herself ? Herself as her mother had left her to face life ! And then, as she leaned her cheek on her folded arms on the old desk, and got the hill glimpse off to

the south, she began to recall and to question and to try to understand in herself what heretofore she had only accepted. A swift, passionate current of memories swept over her, of her dim, far-away little-girlhood, when there was always her sad young mother, the father off on the other side of the world on great ships that never seemed homeward bound ; then the sudden, sharp hush of all talk of him, the sad mother changed into a mother a little daughter could not understand because of something different in her sadness, a something that came out of the sadness like an iceberg out of the fog, hard and firm and high and cold ; and that after a while took shape as a thing called a purpose for the little daughter to live to, a purpose that made her hate little boys to play with, and want to grow just to be clever and know lots and lots of things and have awfully good times with her mind. Her mother had said over and over again, in those long ago days, that the mind was the thing to have a good time with, not the heart ; that God had given us hearts just to suffer with and to love Him with, and that if girls really wanted to have a good time, they must get to be awfully clever and have beautiful times with their minds. Always her mother had told her that ; and besides, that men make almost all the unhappiness in the world, and that women were waking up and breaking away and demanding their rights. Their rights ! She could remember her hot cheeks and angry eyes when boys jumped over the fence into the garden, after stray

---

baseballs from the open field next door on the right, and her hatred of Howard Craig, the curly-headed boy next door on the left, and of his handsome father, Judge Craig, who so gallantly handed roses and sweet peas over the fence to her mother when she chanced to be strolling in her half-wild little garden. And then there came up out of the seemingly forgotten, unrolling from some remote corner of her memory, the remembrance of one wild hour when she rushed home from a school party and flung herself into her mother's arms, crying bitterly, "Oh, mother! mother! Why am I not like other girls? It hurts so, not to be like other girls. It's like a bad spell to want to be like other girls and — and then — then not to be!" And her mother had held her tight for a moment, and then had kissed her forehead and looked into her eyes and said, "You are not like other girls because you are mother's girl. Would n't you rather be mother's girl? You just wait and see what mother is going to make of her girl! You just trust mother." And she had trusted mother. And then had come school successes, and college with its glorious awakening into herself. That had proved that it was well to have trusted mother. There life opened out before her just as broad and straight and smooth and hard as the new state road that was building from Holton to Boston, and she herself had all the strength and swiftness and eagerness of the highest-powered of motor-cars. And the name of the great road was the same as the name of that breaking away from the

injustice of men that her mother had taught her about years before, Woman's Rights — Rights ; and in college she had prepared to travel it, and after college she had set forth upon it as the only way. What other girls did, all the joyous times known to boys and girls, she had at first passed by indifferently, with almost some of the scorn of her little-girlhood ; then later, in college, when she had begun to realize herself, to recognize the charm of her own reflection, she had gone into them fearlessly, heartily, but always with her old scorn well concealed and with, deep down, a bitterness latent in her from her little-girlhood when she had ceased to understand her mother's sadness. And then had come her brilliant graduation and the foreign scholarship and the year abroad with her mother,—that year like an imperial triumph in her mother's eyes ; and then the years of teaching in Holton, at home with her mother—those wonderful seven years, when she had led her big, joyous classes in the high school and had become a vigorous part of the Woman's Movement, and found herself, as she thought, utterly, absolutely ! How glad and sure she had been in "trusting mother" ! And how absolute had been her mother's satisfaction in her ! "I know now why I have lived, Georgia," she had said again and again during those years. "I used to wonder." After all, it was enough to have lived for—to be to her mother a full and satisfying reason for having lived. And then had come the change of position, the change that had seemed so

favorable with its headship of a department, its bigger salary, and its wider sphere of work for women. And then, quite unexpectedly and quite unannounced, the Change of all changes for her mother, just when things looked so fair, so promising! And for her — herself — there had come — Howard Craig! Howard Craig, the largest problem her Feminism had had to solve — truly a case of deeper, not higher, mathematics!

The hills startled her back into reality with the reflected red of the sunset. Through the bare tree-tops she could see the tall gray tower of the City Hall, with its clock-face growing faintly luminous in the waning light. She sat up and rubbed her cloth absently over the smooth, well-worn surface of the lid, then into the little pigeonholes and over the finely grained faces of the drawers. But was it enough now, she was wondering, to have been the reason for her mother's having lived? Could she live on satisfied to have been just that? What was she now — now, and what was life worth? And then Linda Joy's smile flashed into her mind quite irrelevantly and she could see little Joy's hand on her bosom. Why — why — the question shaped itself painfully and cut its way into her consciousness — why had her mother wanted her so unlike other girls? Had n't her mother had her youth, her chance? Had it all been bitterness and sorrow, that experience from which she, Georgia, had resulted? At any rate, now she had a right to know, — to know the whole of the story that had



made her unlike other girls. And here in the old desk were the letters, those little packets that sometimes, when she had come suddenly into the quiet of the library in the old home, she had glimpsed as her mother put them quickly back into the deep middle drawer and turned the key. Now, the little packets were hers, only hers. No other hand in all the world had the right to turn the key again and open those little packets. And they would tell her why she was as she was, why she was only her "mother's girl," why she had been trained and had sworn to be free of men, free of things of the heart, free to spread her wings and fly as a new woman.

With a long breath she drew out the deep middle drawer and took up one of the letters that filled it to the brim in the orderly little packets. They were on the thin, lined paper of years ago, written, some of them, in her mother's young hand. She unfolded one from its narrow envelope and spread it before her. The delicate rustling of its faded pages seemed to her a great noise.

CLOVER HILL, March 23, 1878.

MY DEAR LOVE, — I feel tempted to write you a real love letter. I think of your coming and forget my book, forget visitors while they sit with me! It is a kind of happiness that defies orderly expression; it made the morning brighter, counterfeited the spring to my half-open eyes when the first sunshine aroused me. — Here I am writing something like a love let-

---

ter after steeling my heart against the temptation ! Does n't the blood rush into your cheek, and don't you think pleasant things of me when I can't help loving you and telling you of it ?

But the rain now interferes with my letter-writing. It sweeps across the window with a noise that, if my head were on a pillow, would quiet me to sleep, but now only distracts. The fresh green outside sets me wondering if the woods are green, if the violets are opening yet. I have a confused but happy anticipation of sitting with you under shady, fragrant evergreens, of walking with you through rustling grass. Don't you love locust blossoms ? Some day I will tell you what pleasant associations I have with them. Don't you love me ? Certain of it ?

I don't believe the Peri would have wept that morning at the gate of Eden if the gate had not stood half-open, if she had not heard the springs of life like music flowing and caught the light upon her wings. And I, this afternoon, would not feel half so much inclined to seek the same relief for sadness and loneliness if the laughter of the girls from the drawing-room, where they sit with *their* lovers, and their happiness I have just seen, did not aggravate my distresses. What good is a lover two thousand miles away but an instrument for the work of grace, a promoter of patience, faith, and hope !

If I believed my letters made you half as happy as yours make me, I would be generous enough to write you from morning till night : no sewing, no

reading, nothing else should be done. Is n't it strange I like you to find fault with me? Love me as I love you, better and better every day, and believe that I am altogether your

LOUISE.

She felt her heart beat close in her throat. This — this was her mother! This was what she had never let her child be! She reached for another, the top one off another packet.

HOLTON, December 25, '82.

MY DEAR HUSBAND, — How can I have a merry Christmas without you? The merry bells of Yule have little sweetness for this maiden all forlorn. But then I am so relieved about our darling little one. She is well again after a really ill week. Still, Christmas without you is an empty show, a Christmas tree without any lights. And when I think that we shall not begin the New Year together, it seems more than I can bear. You away off on the other side of the world, and perhaps not even safe on land! But we shall be thinking of each other and making hopes and resolutions to love each other better and be worthy of a better love. Be as happy as you can and take what pleasure you find, but let me fill your heart, won't you, dearest? My beloved is mine and I am his! Write me so soon as you have any hope of turning homewards, and believe in the mean time that I am happy to know you are commanding



the esteem you deserve. Love me and think of me. I will dream of you to-night. How sweet it is to be so dear to somebody! Take good care of the somebody so dear to me and come home to us just as soon as you can. I will write again to-morrow.

Your loving wife,

LOUISE.

And he had not come — ever — that Christmas or the next — or the next. In no farthest or deepest corner of her memory could she find her father's face. Only the dark memory of the waiting for him, and then that he had died, and there was that hushing of all talk of him. And once — one never to be forgotten once, the night before she went away to college — her mother had said to her, quite steadily, but holding her so close that neither could see the face of the other, "This you should know, my precious, now — now that you are going out into the world. Men's standards are entirely different from ours. The best of them are false — without a scruple — with just a shrug. And that is — that is why — why, my darling, you must — spread your wings."

She folded the thin old pages and put them back into the little envelope with its many postmarks. What a journey that little letter had made to him there on the other side of the world! And what a journey back to her mother when he was never to come! And that was why! That was why! That was what she had been guarded from — that chance

that women run ! Her great, brave, splendid mother ! What a leader she would have made for the Woman's Movement, she with her broken heart under her breastplate ! No wonder she had made her child what she was ! And this was what life was still worth now that her mother was gone — to lead all women, her sisters, away from this slavery to men, to show them how to keep their hearts and their happiness, and to have good times with their minds. That was the very thing Theodosia was trying to talk about that afternoon. Theodosia ! What did Theodosia know about the great reality of what she was talking about ? But she, Georgia, knew ! It was in her blood, the truth of it. That was why she wasn't like Linda with her little white-faced boy ! Oh, but she would show women how to be free ! And as for Howard Craig, she was as strong as her mother. Her mother had lived through realities. She could shake herself free of just a girl's silly dream.

She drew a long breath and sat up. The hills had quite vanished. The bright face of the City Hall clock shone high in the blue twilight. It was nearly six. Theodosia would be coming. And she was ready to meet Theodosia without any more tears. There was almost a war-cry on her lips. She reached up and pulled the chain on the electric chandelier. The old furniture flashed gay into view. Theodosia should have a hot supper after her talk on what she knew so very little about.

Suddenly there was a knocking at the back door,

out through the dark dining-room and kitchen. She ran to open it, turning on the light as she went. Then with a jerk, because it was a new door and it stuck, she pulled it open.

The man outside gave a little start and then lifted his hat. He was a tallish, slender man, standing there against what was left of the sunset, and holding a basket of vegetables.

"Are—are you Mrs. Pretty?" he asked gravely.

"Oh, no, indeed!" she said, a little curtly, perhaps. She was framed full in the lighted doorway. "You've come quite to the wrong door. Mrs. Pretty is next door—there."

"Oh, I beg a thousand pardons!" he exclaimed. "I am very sorry to have disturbed you!" Her illuminations shone full into his lean brown face and half-smiling eyes. "I might have known, of course. But you opened the door so suddenly."

"It stuck," she said briefly, wondering why he did n't go.

"And then," he went on explaining, "I've never been here before. Mrs. Pretty is a new customer. And, besides, I had a little smashup out at Russet Center, and I had to get another machine and bring the things on." Somehow, he seemed to wish her to know very explicitly just how matters stood. "But there! I beg pardon again. I'm keeping you in the cold."

"Oh, no! I like the freshness," she protested. "There's something I want to ask. You said 'Russet Center.' I have a friend out there somewhere.

I'm a stranger here, you know. She's a Mrs. Rush. Do you know her place?"

His face grew quite luminous. "Know the place?" he said. "It's next mine. And I know Mrs. Rush and the children — they're the greatest friends I have. I'm glad you know them." She could see the color in his cheeks, and his smile was very pleasant, with its little tinge of melancholy — not quite a whole smile somehow. "But I do beg your pardon for troubling you. Good-night!" And he turned to go down the steps.

Georgia had had just time to put the piece of blue India cotton on the old mahogany dining-table and get out two plates from the china barrel, when there was again a knock at the back door.

It was the man of the vegetables. He was a little out of breath with his rapid run up and down four flights of stairs. He held in his hand a great bunch of old-fashioned garden chrysanthemums.

"These — these were in the machine," he said, a little uncertainly, "and you said you are a stranger." Then his eyes grew boyishly shy. "Not very logical, is it, my excuse for bringing them? But Mrs. Rush's children picked them — that's a reason, is n't it?" And he held them out.

"Just plain kindness is always a good reason," she laughed, taking them at once to her nose as women do always with flowers. "And they'll make things more homelike in this confusion. We're moving in, you see."

This time he did not linger. "I'm very glad," he said, a little incoherently. "Thank you! Good-night!"

When Theodosia came in, there were potatoes boiling and Georgia was putting a chunk of butter the size of an egg into the omelet pan. Theodosia stopped short in the kitchen doorway, and the pale eyebrows, that were her great sorrow, went up. But Theodosia had streaks of rare tact. She made no comments upon the change.

"It was great, Georgia," she cried. "It was simply great — everybody said so — by far the best thing I've done yet. There were dozens there, and the married women just shrieked themselves hoarse with enthusiasm." She was absently hanging her hat on the towel rack over the sink and pulling off her trim, mannish coat. "We've got to hammer it into them hot and heavy now. They all asked where you were, and I said —"

"Why, next week I'll speak," Georgia broke in, pouring in her omelet. "I'm quite up to it now."

Theodosia hung her coat next her hat. "And the old home things have done you lots of good, haven't they, dear? I'm so glad. And what a feast after delicatessen! And flowers on the table! Pupil offerings, I suppose."

Georgia heard her own laugh with a relieved and definite sense of having got herself together better than she had realized she had. "Oh, no! A man gave them to me, a man at the back door, as a peace

offering, I suppose, after he had taken me for Mrs. Pretty."

"Not so bad as to be taken for Annamae," Theodosia said. "She's the very thing we've got to work at through the Suffrage. She's just the kind to be a man's slave. She's an embryo parasite."

"How do we know who is n't?" Georgia questioned, watching her omelet critically.



## CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH ONE HERO JINGLES CHANGE CONTENT-  
EDLY AND GETS IN RANGE OF THE HEAD-  
LIGHTS

THE violets, growing for happy lovers with fat pocketbooks, had mistaken the season for spring. And no wonder, with the greenhouse sashes wide open and overhead only the dreamful blue sky. The tang of bonfires on the sweet air of Indian summer might just as well have been for spring clearings, and the recent rains had been as warm and hopeful as those of April. It was only the forests climbing the great hills behind the garden and greenhouses that declared the autumn, in tatters of brown and red and gold; and the bulging sacks of onions over in the fields on the Rush farm, where the Polish tenants had taken in a record crop.

The Rush children, straggling home across the bronze fields, were themselves half convinced that the year was forgetting about winter. In Carl's somewhat literal, ten-year-old mind, the idea stayed only long enough to be flouted; but Jack, aged eight, and a dreamer, still turned over the possibility.

"Miracles have been, Carl," he argued, holding up the wire fence for Corilla and Adelaide to crawl under.

Corilla bore in her plump, brown hands a tiny pot containing a pink verbena; and Adelaide, in her

smaller but relatively plump hands, a similar pot containing an infant geranium.

"But not such — such wide ones," Carl argued back. "Never whole countries and — and things."

"The Red Sea was as big as a country and it did," Jack retorted, pulling Adelaide up on her feet and scurrying on to keep up and gain his point.

"But the winter — that's lots more than just a place. It's everywhere, and miracles don't happen everywhere," Carl settled the matter. "They're just — just in — in spots. You ask mother."

"But — but 'let there be light' — that — that was everywhere, was n't it?" Jack stuttered.

Carl shied an onion toward a crow high in the sunset. "I don't believe there ever was miracles, anyhow," he said conclusively. "Nobody knows."

"Yes, they do. I'm going to ask Mr. Leaf tomorrow. And — say, there's a rabbit! See him?"

After starting the children on their way home, Leaf lingered in the gardens. The hardy chrysanthemums made a gay showing along the path, and beyond them the snapdragons still tipped their glossy green with yellow and crimson. The gray-green stock still shot up in spires of white and pink and lavender. Under the glass in the long lines of greenhouses there were soft splashes of color from carnations and roses and more splendid chrysanthemums; and in the vegetable houses, cucumbers and tomatoes climbed toward the sun in a delicate broidery of fresh green. Beyond the vegetable houses stretched the market



gardens: some of the plots already turned up for spring; some vivid with rows of bleaching celery; some softly rich in the purple and green of late cabbage; all ending in the billows of the asparagus bed—smoky green billows splashed with flame color. Then, beyond all, hills against sunset.

As Leaf strolled along, his brown hands in the pockets of his corduroy knickerbockers, he, too, had the thought of a marvel in the back part of his mind. But it was n't on the weather that he was meditating, although there was every indication of a sudden change and a nipping frost; nor was it at all in a miraculous light that he was regarding the subject of his meditations. He lived too close to nature, and had found life too much of a hand-to-hand struggle, to be very spiritual in his view of material things; too close, as well, not to see, quite clearly and simply, the spiritual over and beyond, and yet touching upon, the material. Their relative positions, to Leaf, were exactly those of the hills in the sunset, and below the hills, but closely impinging upon them, his vegetable gardens. Just at this particular time he was thinking how fine it felt to have paid off every cent of the mortgage that day. Every inch of the fine, fertile forty acres, every leaf growing upon it, every nail in the old, weathered gray farmhouse, every shingle on its sloping roof,—all of it—all was his—paid for that morning in cold cash. And cash that he had made—every cent of it. To no man on God's earth was he under obligation for a penny. Just he and the

good brown earth—they were the partners in the business. And then quite unconsciously, used as he was to loneliness and to thinking things aloud, he took his hands out of his pockets, jingling a little change, and looked at them. They were what had paid off the mortgage—they and what he could n't take out and look at, his wits, and a certain instinct he had for making things grow. They were good comrades of his, those hands. And then he put them back comfortably, all quite without observing what a woman would at once have noticed about them, that they were good-looking hands, rather long and firm and clean—brown, with nails that an artist would not have scorned.

Meanwhile, he had come to the end of the chrysanthemum-bordered path, and had come up against a cloud of blowing cosmos at the door of the carnation house—cosmos in pink and white and crimson wisps. Out of the air of sunset, dashed with an unmistakable new chill, he stepped into the spicy sweetness of nodding carnations, and from them on into the cooler fragrance of the violets, reminded to close the sashes over their delicate heads. As he pushed and pulled, the afterglow quickly paled behind the hills, and the rosy opalescence of the glass faded into gray. As he closed the last sash, a light flashed out in the kitchen window of the farmhouse; and when he passed out and on into the roses, he caught, between violet and rose fragrance, a whiff of frying potatoes.

In the rose house, there were a dozen or so pink Killarneys out since his visit at noon. He stopped and drew down a dewy, half-blown bud. Just at that moment, by a romantic and wholly whimsical coincidence, he caught sight of the big white evening star over the shoulder of the hill, and had a reminiscent flash of that time the night before, and of a woman with the afterglow full in her face, standing in a lighted doorway and declaring, somewhat curtly, that she was "not Mrs. Pretty." In another moment, he was out again in the aroma of the potatoes, Jock, his shepherd dog, was barking furiously, and two huge yellow automobile lamps were glowing out on the state road, the other side of the farmhouse. The lamps were at a standstill, and there was a great puffing and chugging. In the doorway stood Mrs. Tibbetts, his housekeeper, skimpily and angularly silhouetted, peering into the twilight.

"Want any help?" Leaf called.

"Water, please," answered a voice out of a tall motor-coat that was just alighting.

Leaf could see that the car was a powerful, low-swung one, two-seated, with the hood up—a car with quite a professional look.

"All right!" he called back, making for the kitchen pump.

"Land's sake! Any one killed?" Mrs. Tibbetts gasped. "There's fresh arnicy in the press in the keep room and camphor. 'T ain't a woman, I hope."

Leaf laughed. Mrs. Tibbetts had a sense of values.

"It's only the radiator of the automobile," he said, swinging the pump. "It's thirsty and feverish." The sound of his laugh was as hearty and spontaneous as the water splashing over the rim of his pail.

"Thank God! I'm a-lookin' for somethin' t' happen every day I live, right out in front of this very house, an' the dead to be brought in. Such goin' I never see! Don't mind splashin' the floor with the drippin'. 'T won't hurt the floor a mite." And Mrs. Tibbetts laughed with explosive shrillness and peered after him into the growing dark.

Outside the chugging had stopped. The chauffeur's wrench hammered at a refractory nut. The tall motor-coat had lighted a cigar under the soft hat. Its fragrance was keen and stimulating in the crisp air.

"Thank you very much!" the motor-coat said, as Leaf handed the pail to the chauffeur. "Have a cigar?" And he held out his case.

"Thanks, yes! not much of a smoker. But this is a good smoke — from the smell of it."

"Not so good a smell as your fine air. That's good enough to keep people well without doctors, it seems to me." And he offered his cigar as a light.

Leaf took it and puffed. The glow flared up into his thin, boyish face with the lines in the forehead, and the firm, thin-lipped mouth. His eyes were down as he puffed. He lifted them suddenly and handed back the cigar. The other was looking at him with keen, surprised eyes. Leaf knew him in an instant. The light had resolved itself into two dots of fire.

"Much the matter?" Leaf said, after a minute.

The motor-coat was moving round toward the headlights. "Oh, no! We shall be off presently, shan't we, Cox?" he said.

"In five minutes, sir. She's cooling fast."

"And then we'll have to make a record run," he went on. Leaf could feel his eyes on him in the dark. "Office hour at seven and not had my luncheon yet, not to speak of dinner." He was talking as if he were making time to collect himself, not as if it made much difference what he said. He took out his watch and flared his cigar into its face, then looked at Leaf. "Six o'clock now," he added.

In that little spurt of light Leaf's thought flew back to a trout pole pointing up among young maples and birches and alders. It was the very same face of that encounter years before—clear-cut, blond, square of chin and broad of brow, a little hollow in the cheek. It was a face that within the last three or four years had often whirled past him in the city streets, and that he had unconsciously avoided.

"Some one pretty sick out this way?" he said casually. "Usually we country folk know when a neighbor is in trouble."

"Oh, no! Not acutely ill. Just the little chap up at Mrs. Rush's. She did n't feel equal to bringing him in to-day, so I came out—to give him his treatment. I'm making a fight of it." Still there was that strange little undertone in his talk, as if he were thinking of something quite different from what he



was saying, and with difficulty keeping himself from saying it. Leaf's own undertone of thought grew insistent.

"A fight with — with —?" he asked vaguely.

"Inheritance — that's what it amounts to. A dissipated father back of it." His voice was a little breathless.

Leaf braced himself for his next word. "I understand," he said. His own voice sounded far off. "I know them all well, the Rush children — they — they are great — great friends of — mine — quite my best friends. And you — you are —?" He hesitated, forgetting just what he had in mind to say, and stepping nearer the white range of the headlights.

There was a minute of silence as deep as the night sky over them. Cox sprang into his place. Then Leaf felt a hand grip his shoulder.

The motor-coat was saying with a little laugh, "Don't you remember me? All the time — ever since — I've been wanting to find you and — and apologize for — for being a chump. Don't you remember that day — years ago — and my three little trout — and the lift you gave me up in the hills beyond Holton? I'm glad to catch up with you again!" and again he laughed that same boyish, light-hearted laugh of that long-ago spring day.

Leaf had gone quite white even in the half dark. Craig feared from memory and from the silence, that his lips were thin and scornful. But he felt his hand clasped.

"You don't remember" — Leaf was speaking slowly and with a gentleness that Craig knew could only come through a half-smile — "you don't remember—because you never knew—the—the lift you gave me—that day."

Craig gripped his hand hard. "I don't see how—possibly. But I do see now—and have seen ever since—just how right—how right you were to run after the train and—and give me the devil for being so fresh. I deserved them all—every name you called me—coward and all. You ought to have jerked me off that platform and pummeled me well—and you could have done it—self-satisfied young ass that I was."

"All right, sir!" Cox said. The car was quivering.

"I—I was no fighter," Leaf said, with a little laugh. "I was too light a weight."

"But wiry! Jove! I remember your wiriness. We'll try it out yet, shall we?" He was in the car, leaning out with again his boyish laugh. "Some summer day—a swim—and then a tussle? Good-night!"

"All right!" Leaf called. "Good-night!"

He was gone. Many stars were out in the pale darkness. Leaf stood quite still for a long moment. His thoughts were skimming as fast as the vanished machine on its record run. The mortgage paid off—that had cleared his road to success. But now this—this shame that had followed him ever since that long-ago day when he had given away his secret, and this fear of the man to whom he had betrayed

himself—now this shame gone, too, and the fear gone—and a friend in its stead! It seemed to him almost as if he might reach up and catch the great white star there above the black line of the hilltops.



## CHAPTER V

IN WHICH A HERO IS PROUD OF HIS SURGERY BUT  
IS HUMBLLED FROM HIS HIGH ESTATE BY THE  
ELOQUENCE OF A FEMINIST

CRAIG'S thoughts, too, were making a record run between Russet Center and town. His heart whirled like his cylinders. It was by far the finest bit of surgery in his six years of practice and his more years in lecture room and clinic—this exquisitely delicate operation that he had just performed out there in the dark on that country road. In a flash—a flash of only a cigar—he had seen, made his diagnosis, operated—and the man was cured! He had felt the rebound in him after the cut just as definitely as, day after day, he felt the quickening of the pulse to normal after an operation. And besides—besides—the wonder of finding him again, that strange, melancholy slip of a boy who had so stirred his own moderate, easy-going young ambitions into an awakening of his deepest consciousness, and had challenged him “to be things” worthy of the name he bore and the “things that were [ahead.” His eyes to-night had looked just as they had looked on that far-away spring day when he had so bitterly proclaimed his own namelessness. Craig could see it all now, between him and the crowding lights of the town—the June woods, the milk wagon, the tall, lean boy in blue

cottonade ; and he could hear above the whirr of his car and the oncoming noises of the streets, a boy's voice saying, "You 've a — a heap of things ahead of you, ain't you?" There had been a heap of things ahead of him that day. The boy had been prophetic. And what a lift it had been, not just from tramping to riding, but from a fortunate boy's acceptance of his good fortune and lazy acquiescence in it, to a man's grappling with life and the responsibilities of fortune ! And to Leaf himself it had meant something, too. He had said that Craig had given him a lift. Before the recognition, at his very first word when he had brought the water, Craig had diagnosed him as a personality. And all through the dark, through their tense, groping talk, the strength of him and the charm of him were there, just the man to have been the boy of that unforgettable day.

Cox whirled him from the broad, white sweep of the boulevard into a trolley-girdled street, under big arc-lights. But he was thinking of how strangely that old time was overtaking him, here in this bright young city that he had chosen for his home — to-day that tragic boy come back again into his life, God knows why ! And six weeks before, in the hospital, after years of separation, Georgia Frame, "the little girl next door," come back, needing him, clinging to his help, — come back and to stay ! That much he knew already — that she had come to stay.

His own name stared out at him from his office door under the white electric globe. The car just

brushed the curbing and stopped. Craig sprang out and into the familiar of softly lighted entrance hall and the soft, yet searching, brilliancy of his office. This was his home office, uptown, where he held his evening office hours. Somehow, as he went in and then on up to his room for a shower and a change after the long day, the place seemed pretty lonely. The old time that had come back to him so vividly had not been a lonely time. Always, everywhere, there had been the sense of his mother's nearness — her daily letters and frequent visits, in Cambridge, in Philadelphia, in Berlin, in Vienna — lastly, in London. There her following had ended, for she herself had gone, quite suddenly and painlessly, to the farthest of all countries — gone just as they were planning the return to America and the making of a permanent home there.

"Then you will be getting married, Howard, to the perfect woman," she had said, "and I shall have time to go into the Suffrage work."

"But why, mother mine, do you condemn me to such a fate?" he had laughed. "Why do I have to marry a perfect woman?"

"To — to keep you satisfied always, dear," she had answered. "And I hope she will be quite hard to win. That does n't sound a bit nice and motherly, does it?"

"But why, cruel parent? Why such unmotherly wishes?" And he had put his arm around her, his cruel parent, there in the privacy of their little balcony in Chelsea. Behind her softly pompadoured white hair

and delicate shoulders in their lavender crêpe shawl, there were the river Thames with the barges and steamboats, and the maroon and white patchwork of Lambeth Palace, all printed out clear and serene in the afternoon sunshine. He would always remember how her young blue eyes had smiled at his questions, and yet her lips had trembled a bit.

“Oh, to keep you very busy winning her. That’s the best of training for a man. And then” — she had drawn a little away from him and looked out over the river, and had spoken in quite a different key — “and then, then I hope she will never, never let you feel that — that she is wholly won — always that — that you must strive still to win her. I know you better than you know yourself, dear, even if you are a doctor. I know what you are made of, what’s in your blood. That’s why I’m sometimes — afraid.”

This time he had not laughed and called her “cruellest of parents.” A strange awareness of some kind had arisen suddenly between them, something he could not understand, but could yet quite acutely feel. She still looked away from him toward the towers of Lambeth. Her thin hand in his was cool.

“If only there could be — one other — like you, mother mine!” he had whispered.

And just then the little maid had come with the tea-tray and the card of the Honorable Miss Marrow, on Suffrage business, and Craig had slipped in at one window as the guest emerged from the other, and had gone to his hospital. And then, before an-

other such moment of awareness, almost of clairvoyance, there had come that supreme moment for her when all reasons why had been made crystal clear and she had seen face to face.

All this had happened almost seven years before Craig sat that night at his lonely round table in his mahogany-wainscoted dining-room and, while he ate his thick broiled chops, wondered what Fate was preparing for him. Just once before, that triangle had asserted itself in his life — Leaf, the girl next door, and himself. Now, after all these years during which they had lost each other, here they were again.

Fow, his Chinaman, swung himself through the noiseless pantry door, with a Sauterne glass on a tray.

“Ale — not wine,” Craig said briefly, going on with his study of the triangle. And what, after all the years, had Leaf made of himself, he was wondering. That he was made into a definite character with a definite work he was as sure as he was that he himself had been moulded into that only thing for which Fate had brought him into being. And he felt equally as certain that Leaf was a success in whatever thing he had undertaken. Then presently he began to remember the big market gardens and greenhouses that he had passed that afternoon on his way out and to recall that there had been just that background in the twilight for Leaf with his pail of water. In a flash it was clear! Leaf, too, was true to his name, nameless as he was! He was a master of growing things.



Fow was bringing in the salad, a round tomato in a fluff of lettuce leaves,—perhaps the product of Leaf's planting and tending, perhaps a salad with a story. And yet Fow's yellow face over his plum-colored coat was as expressionless as that of his favorite idol. Craig's thought, meanwhile, was slipping on from Leaf to the other side of the triangle, Georgia Frame. He himself was what he was, and Leaf was what he seemed to be; now what was Georgia after all these years? As he spread his cheese on his saltine, he was seeing her in her mother's room at the hospital as he had seen her constantly during those tragic weeks—running back and forth from her teaching with her gay, brave laugh, her stories of what the girls and the boys had done that very morning that made the recitations perfectly delightful, and her yearning, almost maternal, tenderness over the frail little mother who was, of course, going to be very well again very soon;—then the rarer times, when he had met her in the hall going back to work and he had stopped to speak, and her lips had suddenly trembled and she had turned and run from him that he might not see her less brave. That was the Georgia Frame with which he was answering his own question. And yet, to those who had not known her as he had, she was a rabid Feminist, almost a Militant Suffragist, who was incidentally, and not without some hot School Board discussion, teacher of English in the high school. The climax of Georgia Frame was that she was a Feminist. She always had been

a Feminist, ever since she had sat guard in the old cherry tree and kept boys off the premises.

He pushed back his chair and got up from the table.

"Tell Cox I shall walk over to the hospital. I shan't need the car," he said, going into his office.

When his hour and a half was over, he was glad to get out into the crisp air, under many stars and occasional street lights, and take the longer way over to Mercy Hospital. Sister Sebastian had telephoned that his surgical cases there needed a look before midnight. And it was very welcome, that interval of brisk, quiet walking, between the crowded demands of his office and the long, white wards with Sister Sebastian. "Sebastian" the doctors called her, chosen assistant always at the operating-table, a slender woman with steady hand and quick, clear judgment, and deeps of sense and sympathy in her heart. He and Sebastian worked in perfect understanding.

To-night she stood holding the hands of the old man whom Craig a week before had deprived of his legs after an accident in the freight yards. Craig stood over the bandaging.

"He'd as well be afther finishin' me up, the ould hulk of me," the old man was muttering feverishly. "An' what good are yer arrums, sure, whin ye've not a foot to take you where ye can use 'em?"

Sebastian pushed back the rough gray hair from his forehead.

"But many things can come to you, for you to do



them with your arms," she said. "And if your arms had gone instead of your legs—" One of Sebastian's ways with the patients was to suggest, not urgently to console.

"There was a man got hurted in the yarrds in Boston, the same as me, an' a fortune he made roastin' paynuts widout a leg t'm," the patient recollected between little gasps of pain.

"It was of peanuts I was thinking," Sebastian said, "and chestnuts. And it's easier work than railroading, is n't it, Dr. Craig?"

Afterwards, when she followed him down to get his last instructions, and stood in the wide doorway, she made a sharp turn from her talk of temperatures and anæsthetics.

"And Miss Frame?" she said. "Do you ever see her now? I often think of her and fear that she is lonely."

Craig was drawing on his gloves. "Once," he said. "She came to me according to her promise to her mother, and got a tonic. Just the other day that was. Now she's getting quite back into things, I suppose. That's the best tonic when you're young and have had a heartbreak."

"That and a little prayer," Sebastian said, smiling.

"Perhaps!" he smiled back as she closed the door.

In the course of the next ten minutes, he needed no further proof that Georgia Frame was getting back into things. The shorter way home led him through neighborhoods less residential and aspiring than the

---

longer way; through streets of brick tenements and small corner groceries and not infrequent saloons, and across a little park bounded by a school and an engine house and more tenements. It was at a corner opposite the little park that a low and brightly lighted building made a luminous invitation to the wayfarer. Craig approached, wondering a minute, then remembering and understanding. It was the Headquarters of the Woman's Suffrage League. He could see the brave name emblazoned on a shield over the door and above it the yellow pennant gallantly waving. If Georgia were really "back into things" as he had taken for granted, then no doubt she was within, perhaps herself haranguing, or, at any rate, listening to a harangue. He stepped to the edge of the crowd that spilled itself out through the open door to the sidewalk.

Within, some one was talking quickly, ardently, in the midst of much clapping. It seemed to be the exordium, so to speak. Coming, as the voice did, out through a thick wall of people in the long, narrow room, it had little to distinguish it from any other voice; and, tall as he was, he could not as yet see over or between heads or shoulders. He pushed his way in near two young reporters, who, laughing and perspiring, seemed too much engaged watching and listening to take many notes. Then, suddenly, his chance came. A young woman raised a window and sprang up to the sill for a seat. Another followed. There was an absorbed lull in the clapping. A break came in

the crowd. Through the break he could see a tall young woman in a black gown, with a yellow rose in her belt. Her hands, in their long, severe black sleeves, were clenched quite defiantly at her sides. There was a vivid color in her olive face, and her lips were curled into a very fine scorn.

"No wonder, indeed," she was saying, with a niceness of enunciation as cold and clear as an icicle,—"no wonder

‘There has fallen a splendid tear  
From the passion flower at the gate’!

No wonder

‘The white rose weeps, “She is late,”’

and

‘The lily whispers, “I wait.”’

No wonder, indeed! Oh, the foolishness of it, the pity of it! But we are coming, we women, into our own, after all these years when poets have made fools of us with their love songs! We are sick of being Mauds, and airy, fairy Lilians, and Marianas. In the great words of one of our great leaders, we are a ‘world-wide revolt, born of the instinct within every woman’s soul, that God designed her not to be the slave or servant or dependent or plaything of men.’ The Suffrage Movement is only one phase of the great Woman’s Movement of the world. Women are searching after their souls—everywhere—in every relation of life. And we teachers of poetry must give the new interpretation to these utterances of a darker age!

---

We must give our young girl students a proper scorn for maudlin love and its expression. And for us women—for all women—there must be a new poet who shall shame men from being our lovers into being our comrades, and who shall make a ringing call to us to come into the broad fields of life—not just into the gardens—and work shoulder to shoulder with men, for the black bat—Injustice—has flown.”

It was Georgia Frame, of course, just as hot and scornful and defiant as she had been years ago, on the fence, when the baseballs went over into her garden. Craig almost answered her back, as he had delighted to do in her childhood, just to see her get hotter and haughtier and the red grow deeper in her cheeks. But even if he had had the courage, he found himself utterly lacking in something to say after so passionately scornful a denunciation of what had been heretofore no smallest part of his experience. He had written no love poems, made no maudlin love to Maud or Lilian, and he had deserted no Mariana. Besides, the meeting was breaking up and the speaker was surrounded ten deep by admiring supporters. Craig could hear the superlatives and the exclamations, as he went slowly out again into the street. However, the disposition was still strong upon him to make some sort of immediate answer back. Even merely presenting himself to her at this hour of her triumph and—perhaps—if her icy aloofness were not too chilling, walking home with her—even so casual a

behavior on his part would be in some sort a relief as an answer back.

And Fate seemed to be on his side! As he stood in the shadows near the big schoolhouse, he saw her emerge in a little crowd from the lighted room, saw the crowd disintegrate into individual women with many "good-nights" and "perfectly splendid's," and finally into just Georgia and another young woman of long strides and many enthusiastic gestures, both headed his way. He walked on at a leisurely pace. They were coming along quite briskly, well in step.

"And it was great, simply great, the way you finished—about fields, not gardens! I just adored the ring in your voice!" The young woman of the long strides was speaking joyously.

"And it's true, it's true, Theodosia! The poets have done a lot to keep up the delusions about women. Just think of Heine for instance—

'Thou art like unto a flower,  
So fair and pure and sweet!'

Imagine! 'Fair and sweet'! Of course the 'pure' is all right, but what does a man know about it?"

It was Georgia's tone, still clear and icy. They were gaining rapidly on him. It would never do for him to have heard. He gave them room to pass, uncertain of his fate.

"Why—why, Dr. Craig! That's you, is n't it!" came quickly in quite another tone of Georgia's voice. "I was n't a bit sure." They had stopped and she

had drawn her arm from her friend's and was holding out the very hand that so recently had been clenched into a fist. "And Theodosia,—Miss Pell,—may I present my friend Dr. Craig?"

When the greetings were over, and he was walking along with them at a gait somewhat more moderate than their former pace, his chance came to answer back.

"Georgia has just been covering herself with glory in a perfectly stunning Feminist speech," Miss Pell was explaining. "You ought to have heard her, Dr. Craig."

"I did hear her," he said quietly. "I was there. I was sorry for Tennyson."

"It — was n't fair!" Georgia exclaimed. "It was an unfair advantage and —"

"But you are one, are n't you?" Theodosia broke in.

"I am, most certainly," he asserted.

"Then, Georgia, it was perfectly fair. Dear me! I wish more men were! You see it all the time in your profession, don't you, Dr. Craig? And then a physician can do so much for the Cause."

"I did n't know you were," Georgia said in a lower tone. "I never thought then—in the hospital—of the Movement."

"And then," Craig went on, with a little laugh, "you see, this is n't by any means the first time I have heard Miss Frame make similar speeches—not quite so profound and finished, perhaps. On the fence



and up in the cherry tree—don't you remember making them, Miss Frame?"

She laughed, but not quite gayly. "It was then," she said, "that things were making me a Feminist. I'm not a convert, like Theodosia."

"It was then that you converted me," Craig said lightly, "and I've never swerved."

They were at the door of their apartment building. Craig held it open, his blond head bare.

"The newer converts are always the most ardent," Theodosia said, as she went in. "You and Georgia will profit by my enthusiasm. Come to see us, Dr. Craig. There are dozens of ways you can help—in Board of Health things, you know. Now about those nourishing meals for nursing mothers."

"I would come if I could, Miss Pell," he laughed. "But, you see, my entering your bachelor establishment is dependent upon a strange condition. My ticket of admission is three small fish for your cat. Is n't it so, Miss Frame?"

And he looked at Georgia. Her face had lost its color and looked weary in the shadow of her veiled hat.

"But there is no cat, so that would be hopeless," Theodosia cried gayly. "Don't wait for that, please!"

"No, don't wait for that," Georgia echoed, not so gayly.

"We might find a cat—somewhere in the country—some fine afternoon—if you will," he hesitated, again looking at Georgia. "Then I could call on Miss Pell—if you will, Miss Frame!"



---

“Anything for the Cause!” Georgia said. “Perhaps I will — some fine Saturday afternoon.”

Upstairs, a little later, Theodosia, in her blue kimono, frowned meditatively as she lighted her cigarette. Georgia, slim as a birch in her long white wrapper, sat on the couch, mildly sipping cocoa and staring at the blazing logs in the little fireplace.

“There’s no reason in the world,” Theodosia began presently, “why, just because you are a Feminist, you can’t enjoy men.”

Georgia waited to take another sip. “Of course not!” she finally agreed. “It’s just the way that’s different — the new attitude. Men understand. And then a woman is free to live her own life. Mother — mother used to say to me over and over again, ‘Keep your wings spread, dear! Be as free as a bird!’ When I was a little girl, I used to play that I was a bird in the old cherry tree. That was what Dr. Craig meant to-night. It was mother’s favorite game.”

Theodosia held her cigarette between her long white fingers, the smoke aureoling her loosened ruddy hair.

“That’s the true way to help the Cause,” she said meditatively, — “to train the very babies into wanting their rights.”

“Sometimes — sometimes, they are born that way,” Georgia said bitterly. 。

## CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THERE ARE FLOWERS AND LITTLE CHILDREN AND FRESH BREAD, AND, FOR ONE HERO, A FIRST WOMAN

AFTER trolleying to Russet Center, Georgia started briskly forth to find the shabby gray house at Russet Four Corners. It was the Saturday afternoon two weeks after her meeting with Linda and little Joy in the doctor's waiting-room, and a most auspicious time for her outing. Theodosia had gone to Boston to a meeting of the College Equal Suffrage League, and the little apartment on the top floor of the Lynton had taken upon itself something of the semblance of an orderly home. Mrs. Pretty declared it neat as wax if it was that unshiny-lookin'; and Annamae pronounced it simply grand only for the new curtains bein' so plain-like. Theodosia, after her years of bachelor homelessness, was proud of it, and talked much of home influence among the masses, and planned afternoon tea-parties at which she and Georgia could make the Suffrage palatable with cinnamon toast and tea. Theodosia knew that creature comforts and cordially extended hands are great motive powers in all reform movements. To Georgia herself, the four sunny little rooms had already grown to be home, and the old furniture had settled into the new corners and against the new French gray walls with a grace that took

---

away much of the pang of association. Above all, the books had given the air of home: the old ones in their familiar places on the shelves; the new Feminist literature, a stately and inspiring procession across the bookcase, led off majestically by John Stuart Mill and Ibsen, followed by W. L. George and Bergsohn and Ellen Key and Rosa Mayreder and Olive Schreiner and Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the other prophets, down to Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt; all supported by a lower shelf of bristling periodicals, the "Forerunner," "La Féministe," "Frauenemanzipation." These two shelves, Theodosia declared, were the real Lares and Penates of the establishment. And Georgia, too, felt their stimulus. It was only the piano that still smote her with the sad strangeness of things. Of that she felt a sort of fear, and had as yet had no courage to do more than dust its keys. Some day, after a while, she would have strength of heart to have it tuned and hear its voice again.

So it was quite with the pleasantly anchored sense of having left a home, that Georgia stepped from the trolley at Russet Center and set forth upon the unmacadamized road toward Russet Four Corners. As yet the stone-crusher and the Italian had not destroyed the charm of the winding brown highway through the fields, its dust printed with the light feet of school children and friendly dogs, and the leisurely hoofs of cows and farm horses, and, as well, with the swift tires of the new Ford automobile belonging to Mr. Leaf, the gardener and florist. For the winding brown

highway led nowhere in particular, and held no purpose more definite than turning into a wood road after it had linked the Corners with civilization. Georgia knew at once that she had not been unwise to trust herself to its friendliness. No road could have better suited her mood, half homesick, wholly lonely, and as yet quite separate and apart from the life of the city. It was this mood that had made her vaguely formed intention of not losing Linda Rush turn suddenly into a swift determination to go, that very afternoon, and look her up.

A very quieting and cheering process this looking her up at once proved to be. The road, after gravely and lingeringly taking leave of the last straggling white houses of the Center, crossed a trouty-looking brook and turned off sharply across a stretch of brown meadows and onion-fields, all sunny and quiet in the light of early afternoon. Beyond the fields on the right, the long ranges of hills lay brown against the west. Ahead, between the western and the eastern ranges, there was just blue sky over the river and its valley, and under the sky more brown of low woodland. Along the roadside a late clover now and then glowed audaciously among the frosted asters and butter-and-eggs. Presently, Georgia stooped and picked one. She did not put it into the bosom of her black serge coat, but she could not help its being of a shade with the color that was coming into her cheeks. A rural mail-carrier overtook her, driving a shaggy pony in a little black wagon. He leaned

around and looked at her inquiringly over his spectacles, and moved over on the narrow little seat.

"Room fer two ef y've a min' ter," he said. "I'm goin' where you air, thet's dead sure."

And when Georgia had declined because of the advantage of walking as a form of exercise, and had mentioned Mrs. Rush, he grew even more kindly, and declared that he would tell Mrs. Rush she was comin'; he always did the neighbors a good turn thetaway when there was company comin'. And those glass houses and gardens off there on the right? Those were the Leaf gardens and houses. Funny name, was'n't it, f'r a gardener! But it was a reel name s' far as he knew. An' Mr. Leaf, he was a reel man, dead sure. And then his wagon rattled on into quiet and vanished around a turn, and Georgia put two and two together and remembered the man at her back door who had called her "Mrs. Pretty" and come back with the peace-offering of asters. She could see just such asters now in his gardens; and there were men busy with red ploughs and a yellow thing that was a cultivator, and the sun shimmered on the glass roofs, and an automobile was standing at the door of one of the greenhouses and getting itself loaded with flat white boxes. What a joyous business that must be, making things grow! Some time she would try it and give up teaching and suffrage work, and just settle down and make money in a pleasant way. And then a man came out of the far greenhouse with a tray of something purple and green. It was a



tray of violets, of course. And the man carrying them — the tall, slender man with no hat on his roughened brown hair — it must be Mr. Leaf, of course, the man who had given her the asters. Was ever neighborhood so friendly, so easy to get acquainted with! Seeing the violets was almost as if he had given her the whole tray. And she remembered quite well why his hair was so roughened, just like a small boy's after a tussle. He had a cowlick. That night at the back door he had pushed it back out of his eyes, as he had stood with his hat off.

But, friendliest of all, just at that moment there pelted around the next turn of the road a white-eyed dog and some hatless children, and the next minute Georgia was hearing that Mr. Cuddy had told mother and that mother had sent them on to say "Hurry up!"; and she was learning that it was Carl that was doing the explaining between breaths and tugs at his stocking loosened in the run, and that it was Jack who was looking at her so shyly out of large brown eyes, and that it was Adelaide who held fast to Jack's hand, and Corilla who dimpled in the very same creases as her mother and had a red ribbon on her hair. The children made pleasant traveling of the two blocks or so between Mr. Leaf's and the shabby old gray house where Linda stood on the little stoop waiting for them. Corilla had already quietly announced that Joy was having his nap and that mother had bread in the oven.

No doubt it was partly the bread in the oven that

made Linda's cheeks so pink as she ran out and kissed Georgia, just as if they had been intimate friends all through college and had corresponded ever since.

"Oh, you dear!" she cried. "And you did mean that you did n't want to lose me!"

"Mean it! After finding you just when I needed you!" Georgia answered, with a little squeeze of Linda's hand.

"Dr. Craig said you were coming," Linda went on, as she led the way into the wide old hall, picking up Adelaide's little red sweater and Jack's arithmetic as she went. There were a tricycle and a bicycle and a gocart in the hall, and the pattern was quite rubbed out of the linoleum on the floor and almost faded from the ancient wall-paper. Out through the door at the back there were chicken-coops and a green pump and a side of a red barn, and on beyond, Mr. Leaf's gardens and houses.

"But even then I did n't think you really would come," Linda added, as she opened the door into a bright west room that smelled pleasantly of the birch logs smouldering in the broad fireplace and needed a new rag carpet. "Now take off your hat and your jacket and drop right into that chair. It's the best rest here. Corilla, you and Adelaide will have to watch the bread."

"Dr. Craig told me to take hold of you—and I did, with a good grip,"—Georgia laughed. "One has to have something to take hold of, Linda."



"I know, my dear!" Linda was stirring the birch into a blaze and remembering that she still had on her big white apron.

"Leave it on! Do! And come and sit down and let's talk and talk and talk." Georgia's head was against the high back of the "best rester" and she was sniffing a Baldwin apple that Carl had put into her lap. "And little Joy? He's better?"

"He's going to be better. He's got to be, Dr. Craig says. But it's a slower fight — against — against what you're born with." Linda had obeyed and drawn her chair near, and leaned forward quite ready to talk. Her eyes lingered on Georgia's slender white wrists and hands against the clinging black of her gown. Linda's own hands, folded in the lap of her white apron, were brown and large-jointed. And she had had *such* pretty hands!

"You are just as stunning as ever, Georgia," she said, with her dimpling laugh. "You haven't changed a mite since college. And Dr. Craig? He seems to have known you for ages."

Georgia flushed and sniffed her apple. "I — I never seem to think how I look these days. I don't care. Mother always cared." Linda caught her hand close. "And Dr. Craig? Oh, I used to know him ages ago — when he was a horrid boy next door. I thought all boys were horrid. Then for years and years I didn't see him. He was at college and in Europe, and here. I forgot all about him. Then — then mother came here this fall to help me settle and get used to being

---

in a strange place and — and there was her sudden illness — and there — there was Howard Craig.”

She could feel the hard palm of Linda’s hand as it pressed hers close. She wondered if Linda felt the throb of her pulse.

“And since college?” Linda asked on, in the voice that soothed little Joy. “You’ve been doing such grand things, Georgia! I have n’t understood what they all mean. I’m awfully behind in everything, with all my babies and — and trouble. But I always remembered you and I’ve been proud.”

“Why, I’ve done nothing, my dear — absolutely. Of course, mother thought everything I did was grand. I just taught in Holton, and I’ve worked in the College Equal Suffrage League, and for the National Trades-Union League, and the Social Purity League, and the American Federation of Labor, and the National Child Labor Committee. But there’s such oceans to do that what you do seems nothing.”

“Always — in college — ’way back there — you were — were that way, were n’t you?” Linda hesitated, still holding her hand and looking up at her with those sweet, adoring eyes.

“Always. Mother was. It was bred in my bone.”

“I suppose I — I was n’t enough that way,” Linda went on, in a lower tone, looking at the birch logs. “A girl gets so — so swept off her feet. She hasn’t any chance. And Carl was so — so wonderful.” Her voice had grown suddenly quite low and thin. “That’s just

it, Georgia! There's the other side of the Woman Question."

"Mother! The bread is out! I took it out!" Corilla called, appearing suddenly with Adelaide at the door.

"Not burned?" Linda said, with a swiftly gathered smile.

"Not a weeny bit, mother! It's fine—out on the kitchen table."

"And smells fine," Georgia added.

"Then, children," Linda said, her smile back again on lips and in eyes, "could n't you be awfully smart girls and bring us a little loaf here and make us a pot of tea? And the jam in the pantry? You can get that."

There was an immediate scampering to obey. Linda again turned over the birch logs.

"Anyhow, dear," she said, in her usual voice, "you've kept yourself fresh and lovely. And you'll be meeting people here and they'll be crazy about you. I wish I could introduce you. But people have just about forgotten me. You see, after—after my trouble there was nothing for me to do but take this old family place and be thankful for it. But, perhaps, in the spring, after Joy gets better! And he's going to get better, Dr. Craig says so."

"But, my dear! Don't think of such a thing, with all you have to do. Just let me come out here this way and—and keep hold of you, Linda."

"Of course, you shall, and let me keep hold of you

and — be something!” Linda exclaimed, with a little sigh. “But then, perhaps, we could have a garden-party. Mr. Leaf would give us all the flowers we wanted and the chil —”

“Mr. Leaf!” Georgia broke in. “Do tell me about Mr. Leaf. He blew my way the other night, to my back door, and —”

“And gave you some flowers. He came right over here the next day and told me about it. You showed your judgment in taking them and being nice, my dear! Mr. Leaf is wonderful, and such a friend!”

“But who is he and — and why is he? His name sounds almost — almost made up!” Georgia said.

Adelaide and Corilla were taking the books and papers off the table and spreading the tea-party.

“I know it sounds so, but not a bit when you know him. It’s just his name, that’s all there is to it. And he’s a gentleman through and through, from his heart out. He’s so — so high in his mind, and so simple. And then somehow you’re sorry for him. I don’t know one thing about him, except that there is an old lady living with him who helped bring him up. And he is a gardener, why — why, just because he is a gardener. He has to be! And there he is now, I do believe, coming to this window!”

One of the west windows was darkening. Outside there was a bunch of cosmos and behind it a man. The small-paned, old sash flew up and Mr. Leaf and the cosmos leaned in.

"Oh! I beg pardon!" he cried. "I did n't know of the —"

"Don't beg pardon!" Linda said gayly, taking the cosmos. "You know Miss Frame, and the tea's ready. We needed your flowers for the table. Besides, we were just talking about you."

"But does Miss — Miss Frame know me?" he hesitated, with a little laugh, leaning out of the window again. He was hatless. The cowlick was rampant. He smoothed it down. "I met Miss Frame only — only professionally." And he shied on Georgia a quick, uncertain glance.

Something about him aroused her to astonishing and friendly frankness.

"It was I that began to talk about you," she said. "I asked Mrs. Rush who you were."

"Oh! And she told you?"

"Yes, everything! That you are her friend."

He colored all over his thin brown face, and looked at Linda cutting the fresh loaf. "Thank you! I will come in if I may." And he vanished from the window.

"Don't you see," Linda whispered, "how somehow he makes you — sort of sorry, and you don't know why?"

Georgia nodded. "That was why, I suppose, that night, I did n't shut the door."

"He's washing his hands in the kitchen!" Corilla ran in to announce, bearing a pat of butter.

And then Adelaide followed with the jam, and Mr. Leaf followed her with the brown teapot.

"The girls confessed to being afraid to carry hot tea," he said, landing it on the tile. "They have n't the spirit of the age, Mrs. Rush."

He was standing awkwardly, stooping a bit, aware of his hands with nothing to hold. As yet, at such close range, he had not looked at Georgia. She was leaning smilingly forward in the big chair, quite ready to give him her hand had there been occasion for such greeting, and quite aware of the shapeliness of the awkward hands. At last, the left found refuge in the pocket of his corduroy knickerbockers; the right, on its way to Linda filling a cup.

"Oh, my girls are like me," Linda sighed. "But be careful! Miss Frame is a real Suffragist. She would n't let you carry the tea."

"Not my own particular pot of tea," Georgia laughed. "No man shall carry that. But you may hand me my cup."

His hand bore it steadily to her. His awkwardness was gone. He met her uplifted eyes quite fearlessly. "I—I, too, am a Suffragist," he said. "I could die for your Cause—if that would do the least bit of good."

"It would n't—the least bit in the world." The color flushed up above the severe black line of her collar. "Don't waste yourself dying for it. Live for it and spread it."

He gave her a swift smile. "Whichever you say," he said.

Linda laughed. "He's obliging, is n't he!" she exclaimed.



"Very!" Georgia admitted, dropping in a lump of sugar. "But how in the world did it happen that you are a Suffragist?"

He was bringing her bread and butter.

Linda was pouring cambric tea into small cups for Adelaide and Corilla. "I never dreamed such a thing of *you*, Mr. Leaf," she cried.

"It did n't happen! I just am!" he said. "I found myself one." He had taken his tea to a corner of the horse-hair sofa opposite Georgia, worn bare in places with the climbing of many little feet.

"So it was with me," she said. "I had to be. Life expected nothing else of me but that I should be."

"Adelaide and Corilla shall be," their mother said.

Corilla lifted large blue eyes over the rim of her little flowered cup. "What, mother? What do we have to be?"

"What — what Miss Frame is!" Linda said.

"I want to be," piped Corilla, edging toward the big chair.

"So do I," echoed Adelaide, draining her cup and following Corilla.

Georgia held out her hand with an embarrassment new to her, and took Corilla's plump one. Adelaide's arm went confidingly around her neck. Children had been as rare a part of her experience as embarrassment.

"By that time all women will be," she said softly, looking into their clear, puzzled eyes, "and all men."

Suddenly, upstairs, there was a faint, sleepy wail.



Linda sprang up. "There's my baby! He's my Cause! Corilla, you can fill the cups again." And they could hear her running lightly upstairs, calling soft baby things.

The yellow of the sunset warmed the bare shabbiness of the big low room. The birch logs had burned down into embers. Adelaide and Corilla, forgetful of what destiny held in store for them, were busy making more cambric tea. Leaf put down his cup and came for Georgia's. The big moon-faced clock on the high mantel struck half-past five.

Georgia gave a quick sigh, out before she could recall it.

"It's pretty nice — this homeliness, is n't it!" she said.

"It's blessed!" His eyes were as clear as Corilla's, but always with the little melancholy under their smile. "And I — I may go to hear you speak?" he went on presently.

"Of course you may. Any one may — when I speak! I only wish I could give my whole time to the work. But I teach, you see. I'm quite a homeless person and I have to take care of myself."

"Oh! How very splendid of you!" he exclaimed, almost gladly.

"Not very splendid when you have to and it keeps you out of your true work," she said. "And now I just must be going as soon as Mrs. Rush comes down."

He seemed to recall himself from something else he wanted to say, and looked at the clock. "The next

trolley is at six. My machine is loaded to go to the station. Do you mind riding as far as the Center in a crowd of chrysanthemums?"

"If they don't mind!" she laughed.

"They'll be glad! I'll be back in ten minutes. Will you explain to Mrs. Rush?"

Corilla and Adelaide were back at her side. "Roses even would n't mind," Corilla said discriminatingly.

"Or—or cucumbers!" added Adelaide confidently.

Linda came running down. "He's waking up," she said. "But I'm afraid to bring him downstairs, he's so warm from his nap. And you must go? And Mr. Leaf has gone? He'll take you over in the machine? Oh, good! It's nice for him, your being kind."

"I think it's good for me—your being kind. Everything out here is good for me, my dear!" And she was putting her arm around Linda's aproned waist. "While I had mother, she kept me going. But now, Theodosia is so—so strenuous!"

Both Linda's arms went round Georgia's neck. "My dear, my dear!" she cried. "You must come often and often. There's the south room upstairs always ready. You don't mind shabby carpet and faded curtains, do you? And the children will love to wait on you. And then to me you're a—a chance to be something, after all."

"But you are something very splendid, now!"

Linda's clear eyes brimmed. "There's not much of me—real gay me—left," she said. "And there never was much but just gayness, anyhow. But then I have

the children," she finished, with a fading smile. "And now here come Jack and Carl with your chestnuts. They've been to the woods for you."

And then presently there was a motor-horn and there drew up to the door in the twilight a great load of white and yellow and tawny chrysanthemums, and on the front seat Mr. Leaf properly capped and coated. And Georgia, after much tumultuous kissing from many small mouths, was seated next him with her chestnuts at her feet, and Linda tucking her skirts in under the robe.

"She's wonderful, isn't she?" Leaf said, as they turned out into the road. "She seems so to me. I've never known any women."

"She's a wonderful type. She's never had half a chance. She threw away her chance just for — for love. Now she needs the very thing Suffrage can do for women. And yet she does wonders for one herself."

"Because she's — she's just a real woman? Isn't that it?"

Already, far up the valley, the trolley light shone around a curve.

"Are n't the rest of us?"

"I don't know the — the rest of you. You're the first."

"Really! It's a responsibility to be the first. Haven't you cared to study us?"

He took the curve sharply into the Center. "How could I — up in the hills — and in the State Agricultural College?"

"But your mother and —"

"I have n't a soul — never had!" he broke in quickly.

"Then you're a Suffragist just from a pure consciousness of right? That's a great point, Mr. Leaf."

He was slowing down. The trolley swept round the corner.

"From — from knowing that — that men are n't square," he said in a low tone, springing out to help her, then reaching back among the chrysanthemums.

"Good-night! And thank you so much! We must meet again and talk," she was saying, pushing her way to the trolley steps.

When she was on the platform, he reached over a half-dozen heads; there was a bunch of violets in his hand.

"Good-night — first woman!" he said, not flip-pantly.

As she was swept on she could see him bending over his lamps. She had flushed hot at his words; then cooled down, asking herself why she had flushed. Then she buried her nose a moment in the violets. After all, it was refreshing to be a "first woman." Besides, he was a great point for Suffrage.

## CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH FEMINISM IS MADE DELICATELY PALATABLE, AND FEMINISTS DO THE TURKEY TROT

ANNAMAE PRETTY was running pink ribbons in the lacy garment to be worn under her lingereee waist. Kathleen Mooney, her chum, wore sky-blue. It was hard to know what was reely suitable to wear to tea with Miss Pell and Miss Frame. They had said t' come informal. Annamae thought that meant t' come just when you've a mineter, and Kathleen, that it meant kimonas or neggljays. But Mrs. Pretty knew better. It just meant not dress up, she was sure, and land knows, Miss Pell and Miss Frame never did dress up. Miss Frame always looked just the same, every smitch of her, Sundays and school days, for all the world like a five-dollar reel silk umbereller wrapped up in its case, on'y f'r thet blowy black hair of hers an' the color in her cheeks that was n't ever touched with no powder, not a smitch of it, as any one could see, Annamae! An' Miss Pell! Land alive! Miss Pell never did look anyhow with all her tailor cuts, and silk linings swishin', an' her hat on every which-away. Silk linin's could n't tame her. So Annamae an' Kathleen were plenty good enough in their black skirts an' fresh lingereee waists, with bran-new ribbons in their underneaths, though, f'r her

part, she could n't see why nice ribbons should be wore underneath. Wait till they was n't fresh an' then put 'em underneath. But Annamae said *they* knew the styles o.k.

The invitation was for Saturday evening, of course, when Miss Frame was free and the mills and stores had a half-holiday; and tea was to be ready round seven o'clock. It was nice an' folksy, a tea-fight! Annamae an' Kathleen were n't half glad enough they were going.

"What'll we talk about, anyhow?" Annamae said, getting buttoned up.

"That's what I say!" Kathleen exclaimed, struggling with lace buttons. "What'll we hand out an' they not goin' in our crowd, an' bein' swell-like an' never havin' no fellers round! What'll we hand out, Mrs. Pretty?"

"Land, Kathleen! You an' Annamae c'n just leave the talkin' to Miss Pell an' you c'n just chip in. Don't tell me! That Miss Pell don't leave Miss Frame time to get a word in edgewise. I c'n hear her in the kitchen when the door's open on the back porch."

"An' which forks ter use," Annamae grumbled on, reversing positions to refasten Kathleen, whose lace buttons were washed loose.

"That's just what I say, what forks?" Kathleen repeated, patting the lace and sky-blue ribbon down over her plump bosom. "Now with fellers there's always the laugh an' things keep goin'. See!"



But things seemed to keep going from the very moment the door across the hall closed on the guests. Mrs. Pretty was listening, her door ajar. It was a blessed thing to have Annamae goin' with perfect ladies. And Annamae's laugh and Kathleen's giggle rang quite unconstrainedly.

Within, Miss Pell was found quite accidentally turning over the pages of her "Actor and Actress Book" on the round table under the softly shaded lamp. The "Actor and Actress Book" was Theodosia's icepick in social work with girls. And the greetings were hurried over to admire Mr. William Gillette in "Secret Service," attired in a fluffy white neggljay shirt, with his hand buried in his disordered hair and his eyes glaring at suspected crimes.

"Gee! Ain't he swell!" Kathleen exclaimed, sinking into the rocker to admire.

"He's a real old sweet!" Annamae declared over Kathleen's shoulder.

"Stunning!" echoed Theodosia ecstatically. "I've seen his houseboat — twice — and once I saw him playing with a little gray kitten, on a station platform — just like any other man."

"Say! Reelly!"

The air was faintly sweet with roses under the richness of coffee; and the delicate clink of cracked ice dropping into thin tumblers came from the little dining-room.

"He's nice through and through, Mr. Gillette is," Theodosia went on.



"I'll bet the girls ain't for letting him alone," Kathleen said knowingly. "He's the kind. Look at the eyes of him!"

"But say! He ain't a bit the comin' kind," Annamae objected, with a cynical curve to her full red lips. "He would n't come to no whistle. He's the nifty kind."

"I think you're about right, Annamae," Theodosia agreed. "Of course, lots and lots of women have made fools of themselves over him — women that have n't any pride about them or any sense. Is n't it just pitiable to see a woman running after a man! But Mr. Gillette would n't want any of that kind any more than any other decent man would. You've read him just right, Annamae."

"Oh, that's easy — readin' fellers. They're regular billboards, they're that easy," Annamae said modestly. "But ain't she a sweet, though! Lookut, Kathleen!"

It was Maude Adams, arch and alluring as Babbie in "The Little Minister."

"There ain't much to her, though, but looks," Kathleen said critically. "An' fellers like something besides looks. You know that, Annamae. Ain't it so, Miss Pell?"

"Of course it is," Theodosia said heartily. "Looks are [the very least of it. It's character and sense that count first every time," she lied on cheerfully. "But Miss Frame wants us for supper, and I think it's time, don't you?"

---

And presently Miss Frame, with a little white apron around her slender waist, was shaking hands with them and placing them at the shining old table, with the white mats and the silver candlesticks on its bareness, and the roses in the slender vase, and a not by any means terrifying array of forks and spoons around each old blue Willow plate.

"You must n't expect much to eat, girls," she said gayly, as she sat down behind the big silver coffee-pot. "You see, I'm cook and I'm not a very grand one yet. I've never had much time to learn. So I've done just what I'm sure of, coffee and broiled chops and fruit salad and cake, and we've got ice-cream from Blynn's." And she looked beamingly from Annamae's high, marcelled pompadour and Kathleen's china-blue eyes and plump shoulders, down to Theodosia's mannish white shirt-waist and ruddy hair. The candlelight softened all into a charming picture. And Annamae and Kathleen, opening the delicately fringed old supper napkins in their black serge laps, took swift note of Miss Frame's unpompadoured black hair in heavy braids around her small head, and the stylishly undressed-up look of her plain black waist.

"I suppose you are both fine cooks," she was going on, as she poured the coffee, "and not like Miss Pell. Miss Pell lived on ready-cooked food before we began joint housekeeping."

Out of the laughter, Annamae was heard declaring that she could n't cook a smitch of anything,

not even a baked potato, and Kathleen that neither could she, not even a boiled egg, and that Miss Frame's coffee and chops were simply elegant. And then the jelly went round and the coffee sent the color flying into their cheeks, and thoughts tingled on their tongues.

"Kathleen she has about a dozen fellers," Annamae cried, waving her fork gayly. "Y' just oughter see 'em hangin' round 'Notions' in Jenkins and Bartlett's. Y'd think each feller was a dressmaker. An' Kathleen pickin' over tape an' pins an' handin' out the jollies."

"Why, Annamae Pretty, whatch y' givin' us! An' how about you at Fenner's when the mill-bell rings noon, an' the pushin' an' shovin' just t' walk with y' up ter dinner! An' them Sundays in the Park!"

"But there ain't no floorwalkers in my bunch, Miss Frame, like in Kathleen's. There ain't no Mr. Sibley an' white boxes tied with silver an' automobile ridin'. Honest ter goodness there ain't, Miss Frame!" Annamae's voice was quite shrill and protestant and her cheeks were pink as the ribbons under the linggere waist. Kathleen was crimson and silent, stirring her coffee round and round.

"But you've got ter have some gentleman friends," she said. "A girl's got a right to have her time after workin' all day. An' you've got t' have some place t' go to, ain't you, Miss Frame?"

"Of course! You just have to. I don't blame you one bit for wanting a good time. That's why Miss Pell and I have this little apartment, because after I work all day I want a pleasant place to come to. And where do you live, Kathleen?"

"It ain't so very pleasant, that's why," Kathleen answered, still crimson and disdaining her chum. "But whatch y' goin' t' do on six dollars a week an' dressin', too? I live with Mrs. Connor down on Canal Street. She takes lady an' gentleman boarders, an' I help with the dishes nights an' there's only four rooms, so there ain't much chance to have a good time."

Theodosia put down her knife and fork, and took a quick swallow of water. Her ruddy hair was quite ruffled up over her high white forehead, where she had had her hand in it, listening.

"It's a wicked, wicked shame, Kathleen," she said hotly. "It's a cruel injustice that you should have to live so. And I suppose that every one of your gentleman friends gets about three times as much pay as you do, and does n't do a bit more work or a bit better. And Mrs. Connor has to buy impure milk and wilted vegetables, and has to crowd a lot of boarders into four little stuffy rooms to pay for the little she has, just because she's a woman and has n't a vote to fight with."

"And you, poor dears," Georgia broke in, with a short breath, — "you girls have n't a good home to rest in just because of the graft of politicians,

who buy a right to put up great, dark, unhealthful, crowded tenements, where landlords can squeeze a high rent out of the tenants." Her voice was ringing and bitter, her eyes shining, her nails white her hands were clasped so tight as she leaned her chin upon them behind the high old silver urn.

"Oh, does n't it make you just die of scorn and loathing for men! And for women to be just their — their bondwomen."

Kathleen and Annamae looked a little frightened, a little as if they had been caught being politicians or bondwomen or unhealthful tenements.

"Oh, it ain't so bad as that," Kathleen said vaguely. "An' there's plenty of places to go nights — movies an' up-to-date dance-halls, an' when you go in your own crowd it ain't so bad, is it, Annamae? An' some girls hang out at the Y.W. an' the Settlement, but that's not for me! None of our crowd's f'r that. We ain't kids in a kindergarten."

"Of course you're not," Theodosia agreed promptly. "You're women and you have your rights and your own individuality."

"And I think," Annamae put in, swallowing hurriedly, — "I think if you're always wantin' to learn people somethin' they don't care particular about learnin', it's because you're stuck on yourself an' think you're better than other people. Gimme the girl that's had her time an' knows. She's the one can learn you a lot!"



"You're just right, Annamae," Georgia said fervently. "We're all sisters and we can all teach each other something. And it's perfectly true what you say about the girl that's had her time. The trouble is, so often they have such unhappy times. But now if you could teach me that lace that's on your waist! Could you, Annamae?"

"Easy! An' Kathleen does lovely lace for pillow shams. She'll show you, won't you, Kathleen?"

"Bet your life I will! That's dead easy!"

"And now for the dessert!" Theodosia broke in. "You take the plates, Georgia, and I'll bring in the ice-cream. It'll cool us all off. I'm hot. Are n't you, girls?"

And then there were more pretty plates, and Miss Frame put on a swell dish of thick chocolates, and cut the big chocolate cake with a silver knife like a dagger in a stage play, and Miss Pell came in with a watermelon of pink and white ice-cream, and asked Kathleen if she could do the new dances. And Kathleen could and Annamae could, though her mother thought them fierce, and they hurried up and left the dishes for afterwards, and went out into the kitchen where there was more room and where there were no rugs, and opened all the windows, to do the turkey trot.

"If we was to have some music, it would go better," Kathleen said. "Ain't there a piano?"

"Oh, yes! There's a piano," Georgia said, "but it's all out of tune. It has n't been opened or



played on since — since it came here. And, besides, I don't know a single turkey-trot tune, do you, Theodosia?"

Theodosia did n't either; she could n't tell one tune from another. So, in spite of the recentness of supper, Annamae and Kathleen whistled "Hoe yo' 'taters, Honey Gal," and lifted their black serge skirts and kicked and whirled and glided with their shiny black-silk legs in high-heeled patent leathers. And then Georgia caught her skirts slenderly around her and did the steps with her small black undressed-kid feet, to Annamae's whistling, and so successfully that Kathleen caught her round the waist and whirled her past the range and the white porcelain sink where the first-course dishes were piled, and away on into the dining-room.

Then the doorbell buzzed sharply. In the sudden quiet the chugging of an automobile came up and in through the kitchen windows.

"I'll go," Georgia said. "It's probably only one of my boys come to get his theme subject for Monday. I'll be right back." And breathlessly, with gay red cheeks and blown hair, she turkey-trotted to the door.

There was a dead pause for an instant after she had opened it. Then —

"Why, Miss Frame! You, really?" a man's voice said.

Then Georgia's laugh and her voice explaining breathlessly, "Why, Dr. Craig! I've—I've been

doing the turkey trot — the new dance. I never dreamed! Come in, do! We've some friends for supper and we've been dancing in the kitchen!"

That much the smiling listeners could hear. He was looking very splendid in his sable-lined motor-coat, and he had taken Georgia's hand for more than a moment, and her blithe eyes and crimson cheeks and a momentary little wildness in her sent his pulses tingling.

"Of course, you'll come in," she persisted, laughing. "And you shall be presented to our friends. One of them is already a friend of yours, a patient, indeed."

"But first," in his turn he persisted, lowering his voice, — "first about your promise. Will you go to-morrow — Sunday — to get the cat? You remember? And to-morrow about two? You don't mind going Sunday, do you? I can get off better then."

She was cooling down a bit. She flashed a look up and down his big, fair manliness in the superb coat. His motor-cap was under his left arm, his crinkly hair brushed close like a good boy's, his right hand bare. Her words at supper came back to her: "And for women to be their bondwomen." But how splendid he was!

"You will, please," he said, bending a little.

"Oh, yes! Why not? I shall be glad to. Motor-ing will be very nice if to-morrow's like to-day."

And then she ran out, and in the second he was alone he found the familiar things of his boyhood —

the desk he had known as her young mother's, now with the large-eyed sad face of her old mother looking out pathetically from a little gold frame among piles of school papers; the old piano —

But she was back again, and Theodosia was greeting him and bearing the dish of chocolates, and he was declaring himself delighted to meet Miss Mooney, and being warmly recognized by Miss Pretty, who pronounced his tonic simply great as a bracer. And he would n't indulge in chocolates because it was just his smoking time, between hospitals, and he could n't sit down because Sister Sebastian had telephoned him to hurry. But would n't they all come for a joy-ride in his run-about, round to the hospitals?

And then in the great laughter, Miss Mooney was saying that Dr. Craig had taken out the appendix of her friend Marjory Flynn, an' Marjory just fine since him doin' it; and Dr. Craig remembered Miss Flynn very well and was glad to hear from her again.

"And soon, Miss Pell, there will be the cat, and I can really have a valid excuse for calling upon you," he said, as he bowed himself out. "At two, then, Miss Frame! Good-night!"

And in the drop after his going, Kathleen was recounting, "An' not a cent of pay would he take for doin' it, and Marjory the awfulest case, Sister Sebastian said. It had bursted, you know," she finished awesomely.

"An' him a swell, too," Annamae commented admiringly. "It's the swells most times that gouges you."

Later, across the hall, she added what she had not said then. "An' he's got the worst case on Miss Frame! Say, any one can see that a mile off, can't they, Kathleen? An' her that cool!"

"She's the kind — the cool kind — that has the worst cases. And, anyhow, she's a reel lady. Say, would n't it kill you the way they got excited about our not voting! If they was to ask me, I would n't vote, would you, Annamae? All them drunken men at the polls! An' what for, anyway?" Kathleen was getting into her fur-lined coat, bought last year on the installment plan, and giving her trouble now about the payments and the old-fashioned sleeves. "Women votin'! Lands! Down our way I see 'em usin' frying-pans."

"I don't want to vote," Annamae declared. "It keeps me hustlin' just to keep in the style, don't it, mommer, without havin' t' worry about who's goin' to be President. Willow plumes come just as high."

"That's right, Annamae! Good-night! It's been dandy!"

On the other side of the hall, Theodosia, doing dishes while Georgia corrected themes, stood in the doorway with a dish towel and a handful of wet spoons.

"We've won them, anyhow, Georgia," she said

decisively. "They're going to be ardent Suffragists. Could n't you see how excited they were? And from them we can reach other working-girls. If it were n't for these odious 'gentleman friends'!"

Georgia looked up from "The Character of Portia." "I hope so," she said, not hopefully. "But the average girl has absolutely no sense of being an individual, a separate spiritual entity. It is the everlasting old piffle about love. If it were n't for that, Theodosia!"

## CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THERE ARE A KITTEN, OTHER HELPLESS, NAMELESS YOUNG CREATURES, REMINISCENCES OF A GREAT MAN, AND ALMOST SOME LOVE-MAKING.

IT seemed hardly fair to leave Theodosia at home that perfectly glorious afternoon with only "Anarchism and Other Essays" for company. But Theodosia had opened a new box of Egyptian Deities and lighted the brass percolator on the low stand at her side, and let down her long, crisp, ruddy braids, and declared herself at peace with the world. Before so establishing herself, however, she had tied Georgia's black automobile veil firm and flattening over her nose and made her put a sweater under her coat. Then, just at the very last minute, after she had craned her neck from the window and seen the arrival of Dr. Craig in his runabout, she had given Georgia's veil another twitch and said, a little nervously for Theodosia, —

"I — I suppose Dr. Craig is really a 'gentleman friend,' is n't he? But don't, for Heaven's sake, let him divert you from the Cause. Do forgive my butting in, Georgia! Of course, he says he's a Suffragist. But I would n't trust him until I — I was sure. And anyhow he's a man."

The bell rang at the words "butting in." Theodosia could feel that Georgia was congealing behind



her veil. But she was not too frozen to put her hand on Theodosia's arm and say,—

“Please, please, my dear! You don't at all understand. You're one just from — from conviction. It's you that might change. But I've lived it always, mother and I. So I know.”

All of which had set Theodosia a-thinking after they had gone, as she sat smoking her Deities in the midst of Georgia's precious household gods. There was just that difference between her Feminism and Georgia's; hers was from pure, clear, cold reason. After college, she had deliberately gone into it as her lifework. Her college time had come two years later than Georgia's, just two years farther along in the college movement for Equal Suffrage, but they had known each other during the years that had overlapped. After graduation, her homelessness and independence had made her choice at once a more radical one; she had established herself in Boston in the very citadel of the Movement. Afterwards, when fully equipped for service, she had come to this great mill-city to start the work among the mill-women. That move had brought her again into association with Georgia, and Georgia's loss into the pleasant scheme of home-making together. As for Georgia's attitude toward the Woman Question, it was singularly unlike her own, which, strange to say, seemed to Theodosia the only true attitude. In college Georgia had been a consuming fire in her enthusiasm, a mighty leader among women.

She had eloquence and rare style and good looks, and those gifts, it had to be acknowledged, made for leadership. But in addition, and especially now after the intervening years, there was about Georgia a certain bitter, high-handed scorn of men that lent to her attitude a romantic and alluring quality. Theodosia's own efforts were aimed at economic reforms — tangible, practical things; she studied sweat-shops, child-labor problems, housing questions. So did Georgia. But at the same time, her convictions seemed to spring from and be aimed at deep, vital, underlying wrongs that had been a cruel part of her own experience. "So, I know!" Georgia always said, closing very firmly those charming lips of hers. It seemed almost as if Georgia disagreed with the whole scheme of creation. And yet she could go automobiling with a man! Georgia was all Feminist, Theodosia all Suffragist.

So Theodosia mused in the old green leather chair, lighting cigarette after cigarette and sipping her black coffee. Then, remembering the stunning picture they had made starting off, Georgia in the depths of a big squirrel coat he had brought for her, — remembering all that, she blew a ring meditatively and wished that Georgia were less picturesque. If Georgia had only had red hair and freckles on her nose, as she had, the Cause would have been more certain of her loyalty. And then, by the law of association, from freckles on her nose, Theodosia's thoughts trailed off to a small Irish lad named Bum

Flannigan, with freckles on his nose, who swept the sidewalk and steps down at the League Headquarters, and from him to the Boys' Club to which he ardently belonged, and from the Boys' Club to Mr. Wedgwood, the manager of the Boys' Club, who had so enraged her the very day before when he had declared that he devoutly hoped, for his part, that the mothers of his boys would get no more excuses or reasons for not attending to their families. Absolutely perverted, such an attitude as that! And yet Mr. Wedgwood was always dropping in at the League.

Meanwhile, Craig was saying, as the runabout skimmed along the meadows outside of town and then curved around what had been the old toll-house and out on the bridge over the brimming river,— he was saying,—

“Strange! It's perfectly marvelous — marvelous — the way the dice have been shaken up for me lately. Doublets every time! If I believed in anything besides science, I should say that Providence was being kind.”

“Don't you believe in anything — anything besides science?”

They were in no danger of having to pay five dollars for fast driving across the echoing bridge. Through the railings and the chinks in the floor they could see the current swirling around bits of driftwood, eddying out from the willows and cottonwoods along the shore, and wavering in golden

splashes on the great stone piers. All around them spread the quiet green-brown meadows, bounded by lonely brown hills. November had done the landscape in shades that Whistler would have approved.

"Yes, one thing," he answered slowly, — "one thing more, of course. Women."

"You're fearfully old-fashioned!"

"I know I am."

"Really! Not in men?" There was not a spark of coquetry in the glance she gave him.

"No. Not in men."

"Not even in yourself?"

"Least of all in myself. But what I aspire to be and am not! You know the rest. Do you believe in men?"

She looked him quite squarely in the eyes with a little laugh as cold as the icicle that hangs from Dian's window. "Not in the very least. But that's why I've always enjoyed them. That's what Theodosia can't understand. I don't believe in them and they know I don't." She shrugged in the squirrel-skin coat. "It establishes a perfectly free and honest relation, you see."

Off the bridge they rumbled, then whirled again cross meadow, mountainward.

"Even with me?" He increased the speed.

"Most of all with you. You've been such a friend — *such* a friend — that above all with you the relation must be absolutely perfect."

He could see a tear shining on her veil.

"Won't you, then, for a friend's sake, throw back your veil presently? Such a veil makes any sort of relation impossible."

"Theodosia tied it too tight, that's why. She flattened my nose into a Hebraic one. She is deliciously helpless in the matter of looks." But she took her arms out of the furs and reaching up, threw back the veil and tied it tight behind. Craig had slowed up and caught a flying end and put it into her groping fingers.

"Now a definite relation is established," he said.

"What, please?"

"You are again the little girl next door — not a whit changed."

"And you?"

"I am the boy still, in the things — the things that really count, and less odious in your eyes, I hope?"

"Oh, not a bit odious, individually, any more. But one of an odiously tyrannical sex." She modified her words with a little smile.

"That sounds like the cherry-tree salute of old. And what, please, then, can be our relation? I am afraid to hear."

The wind was whipping a curly wisp of hair against the red in her cheek.

"The cat, of course. Have you forgotten him? Do you know at all where you're going to find him?"

"Of course, the cat. And do I know at all where



I'm going to find him? In Denbigh, up in the hills, where there are wholesome, germless country cats, born in sweet haymows. And I have a basket in the back for his accommodation."

And up in the hills they were climbing now, winding through leafless woods with white drifts of sunlight on glossy clumps of laurel, and rock ferns still vivid against gray boulders. The valley was growing smaller and smaller behind them through the breaks in the trees: the river, a narrow, unrippled brook; the bridge, a log thrown across.

From the view, she swept her glance in passing over his profile in his close dark cap. He *was* good-looking. Any one would have to admit that. "I can remember your father just as if it were yesterday," she said. "You are like him, are n't you?"

"So my mother said — in almost everything." A color deeper than the red of the wind swept up into his face.

"I remember him so well — best on Sunday mornings when he and your mother went down the path to church. I used to think it looked very beautiful to see them going along so sedately. And once I saw him in evening dress when there was a party at your house — some grand judges from Washington were there. And I was so proud because at the last minute your mother sent over and asked mother to lend her some spoons. There had been some mistake about the caterer's spoons. And your mother sent me some egg kisses shaped like



white doves, when the spoons were returned. I thought your father was glorious that night. I saw him on the porch and at the windows talking to beautiful ladies. But I hated him because he was a man." She stopped and glanced quickly at him, fearful of having hurt him. "What an absurd little bigot I was!"

"You were an interesting little spitfire," he said, with eyes that lingered on her laughing face. "And are there any more memories of my father?"

"Oh, yes; one special one — of his cutting his roses and always handing a bunch over the fence to my mother, always with that courtly bow of his. But I hated any man's giving roses to my mother. Little wildcat that I was about my mother! And then — then — " She hesitated.

"Go on. I can smell those roses now."

"That's why I stopped. It hurts to smell long-ago roses, I think. But it was of your father's funeral I was thinking. I remember it all so well — all the carriages and the band of sad music and the great men that were there. Mother said that men that help make history were there. Mother and I were peeping through our shutters. And I remember — oh, so vividly — your coming out with your mother, looking so different from other days. And the governor was there. And mother's saying that you had a great memory to live up to."

She looked at him swiftly.

"Yes, that's true," he said.

"And you have lived up to it already."

"Wait till I die," he said, a little bitterly.

They had attained the heights and swept out on the clean, open level of the hilltop road. On the right a gray, deserted old house, with broken windows and sagging doors, looked out hollow-eyed from a leafless, neglected orchard. The air was keener and fresher. Below them, on each side, hill ranges rolled off into mist. Ahead, a group of more gray houses around a tall-spired, white meeting-house, leaned against the sky.

"Oh, how did you know that my cat lived in so adorable a place?"

"I did n't know from experience. I just reasoned out that since Denbigh is such a nice place, the cats, if there are any, must be nice cats. We'll slow up and see."

So they came down to fifteen miles an hour and eyed the dooryards and sheds and front steps of the infrequent houses until they reached the ragged edge of the hamlet. There in the road, in front of the big gray house opposite the gray churchyard full of crudely cut and faintly lettered old stones, a half-dozen boys were aimlessly kicking a football. They were the only living things in sight, except some straggling chickens, a cow in a pasture behind the house, and a crow high against the sunset.

Craig slowed to a standstill. The boys stopped their ball and stared.

"Could you tell us," Craig began engagingly, — "could you tell us where we can find a handsome kitten?"

The engagingness of his tone and the grave politeness of his manner sent the color flying to Georgia's face. It was as splendid as his skill, his compassion, his sympathy, his understanding — this winsomeness with boys! And the boys seemed to recognize it — pale, narrow-shouldered, uncountrified-looking chaps. They crowded around the car.

"Mis' Jessup's got cats," called the lame one, last to arrive.

"Where does she live?"

"She lives in here, where we live," explained a little lad in over-long cottonade trousers and a ragged red sweater. "I'll tell her. Mis' Jessup!" And he ran calling round the corner of the old house.

Georgia leaned out, smiling. "Do you all live here?" she said. "Are you all Miss Jessup's boys? Her nephews?"

Craig sat back, well content with her blowing hair and wind-fresh profile. She a Feminist, a militant one, with that little-girl dimple in her cheek! But, after all, she did n't know what she was — yet! She had never been in love — not the eighth of an inch! Then he caught the small boys' answer to her question.

"We — we ain't her nephews. We just — just live here."

"They're State boys," Craig said briefly and low over her shoulder.

"Oh!" She drew in a sharp breath. "I see! And then they don't know really — really who they are, do —"

But Miss Jessup had thrown open the wide, seldom used door of the old house.

"Cats?" she called, gripping a little black-and-white shawl tight around her thin, sharp shoulders. "You wantin' cats? Land sakes! Come in an' take yer pick. Me an' my brother Josiah's hed one line o' cats this twenty year, an' they's three kittens left o' the last litter. They're out in the haymow this minute. You c'n hev 'em an' welcome. Willie, you boys fetch the kittens. Come in, won't you? You from town?"

But Craig explained that they were hurrying to escape the chill of evening and that he had an office hour before very long.

Miss Jessup came lankly and rheumatically down the worn flagstones.

"You don't say!" she exclaimed. "You a doctor? What name?" A pair of shrewd, spectacled eyes looked out of her thin, yellow face. "Land! I've heard of you! Seen yer name often in the papers. And 'Sometime,' I says to Josiah, 'I'm goin' right down an' let him cure my rheumatism.' "

But just here the boys came scurrying back with mother cat and three kittens of varying styles — roly-poly, fluffy, blue-eyed kittens that smelt of

hay. And while Georgia was choosing, Craig was laughing with Miss Jessup and leaning out to the boys with a deft passing of silver, and making them promise to come down to town some day and go with him to the "movies." Then Georgia had chosen the jet-black one with the big tail, and was testing his purr and stowing him away in the basket amid much squirming and faintest of mewling. And the lame boy was saying quite bravely, —

"Oh, we know Mr. Leaf down at Russet Four Corners. Do you know him? He takes us to the movies and we stay at his house."

And another was adding, "And last Christmas he came up here in a sleigh with bells and a Christmas tree."

"And Thanksgiving we're goin' there," Willie cried shrilly. "Do you know Mr. Leaf?"

"Yes, I know Mr. Leaf," Craig said.

"Do you?" Georgia exclaimed. "Since when?"

"Since — since years ago. But good-bye and many thanks! Come to see me, Miss Jessup, and we'll fix up that rheumatism. Cut out the pies till I see you." And he laughed back over his shoulder as they whirled off.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" Georgia called, waving back.

And then they dropped over the top of the hill, down below the tall, empty meeting-house with the rusty weathercock on the high spire, pointing into the sunset-tinged clouds.

Craig's voice dropped, too.

"Do you know Leaf?"

"Yes, twice I've met him."

"That's odd — that you should know him!"

"Why? Why any odder than that you should know him?"

"Because — it sounds foolish what I'm going to say — because you and Leaf make the other sides of my triangle."

She laughed. "Yes, I'll admit, it does sound foolish — but interesting."

He slowed up over a "thankyma'am" that took them across a full, grassy brook, hurrying valleyward.

"It is interesting. Sometimes it seems to me a coincidence; then again it is nothing but an irresponsible accident. Once, years ago, I came upon Leaf on a country road. I had been trout-fishing. He gave me a lift. It was the very day I brought you the three little trout for your cat — the first and only day you were ever even tolerant of me. It was the week before mother and I broke up and went away for good. I had a strange talk with him. I never forgot him. And again the other night, on a country road, I chanced on him. We recognized each other. Don't you see? And I had just found you and your mother again after all these years. Strange, a little bit, is n't it? You and Leaf and I a sort of triangle."

"What was the talk about, that day long ago?"



"Oh, about — about life and the — the chance I had — just as boys talk."

"And he did n't have any chance?"

He looked at her quickly. "Well, not much of a chance, I suppose. I never knew anything about him. But chance or no chance, he's made good. How do you happen to know him?"

"Just chance again. He came to my door by mistake one day and I opened it. Then, when I went out to see Linda Rush, there he was, next-door neighbor and family friend."

"Strange, is n't it?" he repeated.

Now they were quite downhill, flying into the face of a wild red west barred with violet.

"Yes, it is strange. And yet not half so strange as that you should have come to mother and me in our need. That was the strangest — the divinest! And yet you say you believe only in science. Science did n't do that!"

"No, of course not! Fate did, perhaps." He gave her a quick glance. "At any rate, it sounds astrological — the last time the triangle was in my path it meant something. Does it now, do you suppose?"

"I don't know about Mr. Leaf — what he may mean," she said slowly. She was thinking of his good-bye that night over the heads of the passengers, "Good-night, first woman!" She meant something to Leaf, she suddenly acknowledged to herself.

But Craig had not asked her as to that relation.

And instead he was saying, looking quite dangerously away from his wheel and quite fearlessly into her face, —

“But you — you do mean something — to me. There’s no use, absolutely, trying to get away from that fact. I can see now that you have always meant something.”

“I?” She was crimson under the red of the wind, and she did not look in the least in his direction. “I seem to myself never to have meant anything — to anybody except mother. Compared to what I want to do in my Suffrage work I seem to cast absolutely no shadow. And now I’ve just got to throw myself into it heart and soul. Then perhaps I shall mean something.”

He whirled the car back into the road with a sudden jerk.

“And now,” she went on after the little reticence, — “now I just can’t help thinking of those boys — those poor little waifs that don’t know who they are or where they come from. Oh, the bitter cruelty of — of things!”

“Of men, you mean.” He was holding the wheel firmly and looking steadily ahead.

“Yes, I do mean of men. Oh, how the world needs us women! I’d like to go back and mother them, every one, — poor, pale, unloved little lads!”

“That’s what the world needs you for!”

“For that! Any woman can do that! Other things for me!” she laughed.

The town lights were beginning whitely to star the twilight. In the little silence a shrill and determined mewling came from the basket in the rear.

"There's — there's what shall I call him? You must name him — your gift."

"Call him — would 'Peter' be sacrilegious? He opens your and Miss Pell's door to me."

"It would be endlessly delicious! We shall rejoice in his illustrious name." Then, not laughingly, "And seriously, we hope you will come soon. Theodosia and I have schemes to talk over with you. You see, Theodosia is trying to start the nourishing meals for nursing mothers scheme, like the ones in St. Pancras, and I am trying, after school, to get hold of the mill-girls and the shopgirls, down at the League Rooms. The question is, how to get hold of them."

"Why don't you ask Sister Sebastian?"

"Sister Sebastian! That dear saint! What does she know about it? She's no Suffragist. Oh, how dear she was, how dear!"

"Sebastian is — is a little of everything," he said.

"Try her. And you're not working too hard?"

"Not half hard enough."

They were threading in and out of the dark and bright alternations of the streets, blowing their horn; then presently swinging round the corner to the door of the Lynton.

"It has been perfectly glorious," she said on the sidewalk, cuddling the homesick Peter against her

---

cheek. "And you'll come very soon to see how Peter is doing and to enlighten our darkness."

"I'll come," he said. "It has been very wonderful, your going with me. Good-night!" And to himself he was saying, with a fine frown, a close shutting of his lips, "But you do mean something to me, little wild thing of the cherry tree! You can't help yourself. And I mean something to you — to you!"

Then Fow's silhouette appeared in the open office door, and presently the warm smell of mock-turtle soup met him as he went up the steps.

## CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH ONE HERO PONDERES CLOTHES AND THE MAN, AND THE TWO HEROES DIFFER DIAMETRICALLY AS TO THE CAPTAINCY OF THE SOUL

"It's my new suit, that's all," Leaf said half bashfully, bringing the big box in through the kitchen. "They sent it out on the trolley, and Riley went over for it."

Mrs. Tibbetts was cutting up mince-meat at the kitchen table, holding apple quarters close to her near-sighted eyes and to the Miller lamp. There were draughts from the ancient windows, and a small three-cornered magenta shawl was pinned round her bent shoulders.

"Where'd y' git it? Ketchum's Sale?"

"No. Had it made to order." His bashfulness had in it a distinct ring of pride. "First time. Thought I'd try it. They say one made-to-order outlasts two ready-mades."

Mrs. Tibbetts looked over her spectacles, apple and knife suspended. "It had oughter. But nothin' lasts these days, only wimmin-folks thet's widders an' homeless."

"And where'd I be if you had n't lasted, I'd like to know!" Leaf cried, stopping on the threshold of the door into the front hall. Upstairs were his own apartments, whither he was bound. Downstairs

was all Mrs. Tibbetts's, furnished with things from the old farm up in the Holton hills. "Where'd I be, ma'am, if you had n't been good and square with me in the very beginning?"

"You done it all yourself, Billy, every lick of it. Mr. Tibbetts an' me, we did n't do nothin' only ter let y' ride to night school over at Jenkins's on the old blind mare. 'Member the time you come home sound asleep on her back? I'm jest talkin', not complainin'. Mince-pie time's full er recollections."

"Then that's what makes your pies so good, ma'am, the sweetness of recollection," he said gayly, going on with his box, whistling, up the front stairs, and boyishly banging the door into his own sitting-room.

Downstairs, Mrs. Tibbetts began on a chunk of citron.

"Jes' made himself plumb out o' nothin', pore boy, jes' by grittin' his teeth an' workin' night an' day," she confided to the Miller lamp. "An' now homin' me ez if I was his mother. Mr. Tibbetts allus did say there was mighty good stuff in him. But land! It's mournful never to have no folks o' your own, only take-on's."

Up in the sitting-room, Leaf, in the new coat and vest, strutted back and forth before the eagle-tipped mirror over the mantel-shelf, craning his neck backwards to observe his own trim gray shoulders. That tailor was a genius. He had made them quite respectably broad with his good lines and judicious



interlining. And the sleeves were exactly right, neither too long nor too short — just the length to make him unaware of his hands when they had nothing to do and nothing to hold, and not everlastingly want to be putting them into his pants pockets. Oh, the relief of getting a lost hand into a quiet pocket!

Here he stopped admiring shoulders and backed away again from the mirror, studying coat-tails. They were just as satisfactory as shoulders. Sixty dollars was cheap for a suit like that! And the mortgage all paid off! Clear gains coming in. Fifteen dollars just that day from violets alone, and the season only beginning! He could afford a suit made to order. Thirty-five years old! Time for it if he was ever going to have it! And right for him to have it! There was Mrs. Rush asking him to tea. Never handed teacups around in his life before! And Howard Craig's automobile drinking out of his well. And Miss Frame — Miss Frame making speeches that he might hear! Full time that he had something besides corduroy knickerbockers and special sale "hand-me-downs"! And he was n't wholly out of it in looks, after all! That's what you paid for in a "made-to-order" — to have your looks brought out.

Then, as his eyes traveled up his back again, he saw reflected in the glass the only picture in the sitting-room — a thing he had gone without several dinners and suppers to buy long ago in Boston, first

time he had ever been there. There was not much to it, of course,— just a thin girl, blindfolded, holding a harp and clinging to the great round world swimming in blue space. It was called “Hope” the picture dealer had said, by a man named Watts. He could n’t quite understand it, never could, although the wonder of it was that deep down he knew he did understand it. Now it drew a sigh and for a minute made him forget that a red necktie — not too red, just red enough — was what the suit needed. The tailor had said so. And red always looked well on brownish, sunburnt men. But he was n’t really thinking of the necktie at all. The blindfolded girl, so perilously clinging to the globe, had started a very remote train of thought. What was the use anyhow? Who cared? Who was he? Whence? Whither? Then, suddenly, it was just as if the blindfolded girl on the globe raised her head and smiled and said, “We must meet again and talk!” Jove! *She* was the first woman that had ever said as much to him! That was a whither. Who cared about a whence?

He opened the door and ran downstairs, whistling.

“How do I look, ma’am?” he said gayly, flinging into the kitchen.

“My! Ain’t you beautiful!” Mrs. Tibbetts put her sugary fingers under the pump, wiped her glasses, and held the lamp to him, up and down and round-about his elegance.

“You’re just beautiful, Billy,” she repeated.

"You're a right good-looking man, after all. I never thought of it before. If 't was n't fer y'r stoopin'. Quit stoopin' an' stand up. Goin' ter town nights some?"

"Some." He was studying the finish of his cuffs.

Mrs. Tibbetts got the raisins out of the corner cupboard.

"They's wimmin an' wimmin," she said dryly, "an' there ain't no call for a man ter hurry. Mr. Tibbetts, he was goin' on sixty when we married."

Leaf had dropped into the chair opposite her at the table, and sat staring at the big hot flame in the lamp.

"Wimmin's a heap smarter than men," she went on, pursing her thin lips, "an' the men's liable to git caught any time."

He drew a long breath and leaned across the table, his hand in the cowlick.

"Have n't you even the — the very faintest idea where I came from?" he said suddenly.

She rested sticky, astonished hands on the rim of the yellow bowl.

"Jes' what's written on the paper in the Bible," she said, almost in a whisper. "Y' seen that yerself many a time. But land sakes, Billy! You don't know nothin' about the nights I've laid awake thinkin' an' thinkin', an' puttin' two an' two together an' —"

"And making four?" he said, still staring at the lamp.

“An’ makin’ nothin’ at all. I’d begin at the be-ginnin’ an’ say ter myself jes’ what the paper in the Bible says, jes’ the way I wrote it down the day you come. And then I’d ricollect all the people that ever stopped at our house fer milk er buttermilk er cider er drinks o’ water, an’ that ever took any notice o’ you. But I never got nowhere. Thinks I, he’ll want to know some day. But most times I’d fall asleep a-thinkin’.”

“Suppose I get the Bible and see how it looks to me — now — that the mortgage is paid off,” he said. “It’ll have a different look. In the keep-room, is it?”

“Yes, in the keep-room, on the table with the album.”

And Leaf came back with the old Bible and spread it open on the table, open to where lay the yellowing paper across the twenty-seventh Psalm.

“Yes, sir! That’s it, jest ez I wrote it that day in the old keep-room at home, with you settin’ on Dr. Penrose’s knee, afraid t’ git down, afraid of everything, the chickens an’ the turkeys an’ even old Tige, the cat. Them’s the very words.”

And over Leaf’s new, well-fitted shoulders she read aloud: —

“May 3, 1880. This day Dr. John Penrose, of Jenkins’s Post-Office, brought us a State child to raise. A pretty boy, between six and seven year old — answers to Billy — best blood in State, Doctor sez, but it’s got to be hushed up. An’ we promise ter do our part square. Doctor sez may ez well

call him Leaf, fer the time o' year an' him such a growin' youngster."

"And that's all, of course," Leaf sighed. "Between times I forget how meager it is, and I always feel as if reading it again would tell me something."

"There is one thing y' ain't never seen," Mrs. Tibbetts said, starting up unsteadily. "It may not be wuth lookin' at. But I allus did write down the names o' the huntsmen an' fishermen an' folks that stopped in, ef 't was so I could find 'em out. Mr. Tibbetts, he said 't was all foolishness; that like as not y' daddy did n't know you was ever borned. But you wait a minute now. 'T won't do a mite o' harm ter see." And she rinsed her hands and went into her little off-kitchen bedroom and rummaged. Leaf dreamily heard drawers opening and papers rustling. But what did it matter, anyway, he was saying to himself, looking unseeingly at his trim cuffs? He was himself, that was all that was necessary. A father was an accident, anyhow. You had yourself alone to account for. But then — then — he had you to account for. That was the —

"Here it is, right here in the back o' my book o' cookin' rules," Mrs. Tibbetts interrupted him. "It was the handiest place ter write. The Farmer's Almanac was always so full o' egg-money an' butter-money." And she handed him the little dog-eared, well-thumbed, brown paper-backed book; and there, right after potato dumplings, the names began, running away back to the summer of his coming.



"I could n't allus date 'em, y' see," she explained, her hard brown forefinger on the open page. "I could n't allus git the almanac an' find the date, an' then somethin' would come up an' I'd forgit."

A slow flush rising out of the very depths of him, his heart beating close in his throat, Leaf ran down the list of names — great names, many of them, in the great world. Suddenly, he stopped.

"That — that man's son was here, outside, the other night," he said huskily. "It was his automobile that needed water."

Mrs. Tibbetts peered close to the page.

"Lord, no! He was the cleanest, best man that ever lived — the honestest. Been dead this long time. I know all about him. Did a heap o' business fer the farmers up in the hills, an' never beat nobody out of a cent. It ain't likely it's any one o' them. It was a great place fer stoppin' in, long o' the orchard an' the deep well an' the dairy." And with a sigh, she went back to her raisins. "Pull out them pages, though, an' put 'em in the Bible. It ain't the right place fer names like them, 'longside o' potato dumplings."

Leaf cut the pages out and laid them with the old paper in Psalms.

"I suppose," he said slowly,— "I suppose Dr. Penrose knew the whole story."

"Like as not, but Dr. Penrose's gone beyond tellin' any tales. He died the spring you was goin' on twelve —died sudden. You ain't fergotten that, Billy?"



"Oh, no! I was just thinkin'." Then, with a shrug, he sprang up, whistling softly. "Who cares? I don't! I'm myself!" Those were the words to his music.

But suddenly the music stopped. On an impulse so foreign to him, so novel that it was like a denial that he was himself, he turned and, bending, kissed the parting of Mrs. Tibbetts's thin, white hair.

"You've — you've been the whole thing to me, ma'am," he said with a little catch in his voice. "And soon — soon you're to have a sealskin coat and an ostrich feather two yards long."

Mrs. Tibbetts's quick application of her hand to her eyes left a white drift of sugar on her left eyebrow. "Lands! Billy Leaf! Me in sealskin! I'd roast alive, besides lookin' a sight."

But Leaf was halfway upstairs, and then down again in his old coat, lighting his lantern. "There's ice in the air," he said. "I'm going to fire up a little more under the roses and carnations."

Out in the greenhouses, in the dark sweetness, with cold white stars glimmering through the glass roofs, he still whistled lightly, the whistle of abstraction. For he was saying deep things to himself — things that amounted to just that he was the master of his fate, the captain of his soul. And his subconsciousness was wondering what the blindfolded girl would think of his story.

In town, at that identical moment, Craig, whirling between hospitals, was thinking how little he

or any one else was the master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul. Three months before he would have sworn to his own mastership, his own captaincy. Then had come a ring at his telephone, a frightened girl's voice with a strangely familiar ring to it — and Georgia Frame had come into his life.

Just now, in the hospital office, as he had stood at the big desk under the tall black crucifix, writing his directions, he had turned to Sebastian at the telephone book, and said,—

“I've taken a liberty. I told Miss Frame to come and talk to you about Woman Suffrage. She's a great Suffragist.”

Sebastian's surprised brows went up to the black band under her crisp cap frill.

“To me! I'm glad you did, if it will bring her to me. But what do I know of the outside world?”

“You know the inside world — that's the real world.”

“Oh, yes! But it is too simple — what I know!”

“It is the simple that we in the outside world need to know.”

Sebastian's thin, strong hand caught at the silver cross on the cord around her neck, and she looked puzzled.

“Miss Frame's mother talked — talked very freely to me,” she said. “People do, you know, often.”

“Of course they do! I know that. I do, for instance,” he answered eagerly. “And you — will — ”

“Sometime,” — she hesitated, — “sometime, —

at the very right time, I will tell Miss Frame — what she said.”

“Shall I be — be glad?” A color like a girl’s had spread over his face, up to the crinkly hair and under it. He tugged at the buttons of his left glove.

Sebastian smiled faintly. “You?” she said. “Why should you care?”

“I do. You know it.”

“I know nothing except that everything — is just in God’s hands. Don’t try to force anything. Wait. God has — common sense.”

And at that identical minute, the Feminist was yawning and putting away red ink and pens and tying up packets of themes. The next minute she was giving Peter a saucer of warm milk under the kitchen range, and listening to his small purr.

Theodosia, fragrant of wintergreen, with gleaming teeth and a shining, well-scrubbed countenance, stood in the bathroom doorway.

“I’m going to bed, too,” she said. “But does n’t every single thing in life just go to show that women are the only ones that can remedy all the terrible social evils? Now, think of those boys up in Denbigh you were telling me about. If women had a vote such things could n’t be!”

“Of course they could n’t!” Georgia agreed. “And if women were n’t fools about men in the beginning — ”

“Well, they never would be if they had their rights,” came from Theodosia’s little bedroom.

## CHAPTER X

### IN WHICH HEROES AND HEROINES REST AND TWO UNDERSTUDIES WALK THE BOARDS MERRILY

MR. BURKE, the market-man, need n't have been facetious, or have tried to be, Theodosia was thinking angrily as she held her umbrella low against a sheet of rain that was almost snow. It was bad enough to have fresh eggs sixty cents a dozen without having salesmen impertinent about it.

"Hens are n't what you might call loyal, are they, Miss Pell?" Mr. Burke had said.

And she had answered witheringly to his miserable joke, "They're unenlightened, like all anti-Suffragists, Mr. Burke. There is no room for brain in a hen's head." And she had not ordered any eggs of Mr. Burke.

This passage of wit had been the finale of Theodosia's morning in the markets in the interest of nourishing meals for nursing mothers, of which committee she was chairman. Mrs. Raymond Whittlesey and Mrs. Henry Luce were the other two members, and it had seemed only right and proper that in the division of labor, they should look out for the nursing mothers and Theodosia for the meals. Figures and statistics had always been her strong point, and, after logic, mathematics her favorite study. So it was a comparatively simple

affair to get prices on brisket and leg and sticking piece, all quite as good for soup-stock as were the most expensive cuts; and on vegetables in the bulk direct from market-gardeners, especially carrots, because they were so nourishing.

To these considerations and calculations Theodosia had given her morning, and, as yet dinnerless, had lapped well over into the chill, rainy afternoon. All of them, except Mr. Burke's gibe, were written down in fine, regular, very black penmanship in a stout little leather-bound book in Theodosia's raincoat pocket. That particular pocket had a deep flap and just room enough for the book and a non-leakable fountain pen. Quite as trim a fit was her olive-green raincoat, out of which her ruddy head protruded like a spring poppy from its sheath. And in quite a poppylike manner she and her umbrella swayed against the gusts that swept Rochambeau Street, and drove every chick and child into the high, small-windowed, red-brick tenements. At the next corner, Rochambeau and Daly Streets, was the Boys' Club, a redeemed saloon, with immaculate cheese-cloth door curtains and hopeful rows of geraniums in the front windows.

Theodosia took the turn bravely, umbrella lowered over her Tyrolese hat, in the face of a new broadside of icy rain. Her raincoat and short skirt swished around her shoe-tops. Ahead of her lay the open sweep of a mill canal spanned by an arched bridge; beyond, high mills with lines of brilliantly

lighted windows. At so breezy a point it took some engineering to keep her umbrella in her cold, wet grasp.

And just then, some one or some thing, not the wind, dexterously took it out of her cold, wet grasp, and held over her and himself a miniature circus tent in black cotton, saying placidly,—

“Which of my boys’ mothers have you been perverting from duty to-day, Miss Pell?”

It was that odious Mr. Wedgwood instantaneously emerged from the redeemed saloon.

“None,” she said, not cordially. “I have been studying men.”

He had shut her dripping umbrella and recklessly poked it under his left arm. With the right hand he shielded her from the cold blast with the black cotton circus tent.

“Studying men? Where, please? On Rochambeau Street? You omitted me!”

“Of course not! Everywhere. Market-men all over town. I was taking a short cut home through Rochambeau Street.”

“Market-men! I don’t know market-men very well,” he said in that deliberately reflective fashion that was so peculiarly his own and so objectionable. “But then they *are* men, of course!”

“Oh, yes! Of a kind!” In the swift glance she had given him on the bridge when the wind had lashed them so unceremoniously together, she had seen instantly that the most annoying thing about



him, after his attempt to be ironical, was his eyeglasses. His round, almost cherubic, beef-eater sort of face, atop of six feet of stalwart length, was absurd with eyeglasses. He was almost like a comic valentine of Cupid.

"Subdivision I, Men, under Class A, Brutes?"

"Not at all! That's the vulgar, old-fashioned idea of what women think of men. These days women are too moderate and fair and enlightened for vituperation."

"Or for dynamite?"

"But that's only the extreme of the movement — the very small extreme."

He said just what she knew she had given him occasion to say.

"In dynamite, a very small extreme is sufficient, I believe." Then quite irrelevantly he changed the subject. "By Jove! This isn't my umbrella at all," he exclaimed. "I thought it seemed different. This is Bum Flannigan's."

She relented at the name and laughed. "At any rate, it's a providence. Mine was nearly blown inside out. How did you get it?"

"I'll be absolutely honest. I was swinging clubs in the gymnasium with a class of youngsters. I saw you blow by, gave my place to Romeo Mariani, grabbed my coat, and an umbrella out of the bunch, and bolted. Bum Flannigan isn't there to-day anyhow."

At this moment, by a mercy, since Theodosia

could n't think of an answer to such frankness, they turned from Daly Street into South Street, and straight and unmistakable, through the smell of the wet, came the joyous smell of freshly boiling coffee. Is there on earth any more hopeful smell after tired nights or cold journeys or weary tramps! Double extract of comfort, quintessence of hopefulness, elixir of renewed faith in humanity! In heaven will there be any diviner fragrance to greet weary travelers!

But no such outburst of feeling was given utterance to by either Theodosia or Mr. Wedgwood. Neither broke into the prose of their history with any such apostrophe. Instead, after an ecstatic sniff, he said briefly and to the point, "Oh, coffee! Won't you come in? I know the place well," — the "place" being not what you might infer from the term, but a modest, Nottingham-lace-curtained, warmly lighted little shop on the other side of the street. Upon one window, in flowery white lettering for all the world like frosting on a bride's cake, there flourished the prosaic word "Bäckerei"; and on the other window, in as ornate a script, the flowery name, "Max Blumenbach."

And Theodosia, without reference to any logic other than that of circumstance, heeding only the fragrance and the inward conviction of dinnerlessness, gushed quite joyously, "Oh, do let's!" just as if the cherubic manager of the Boys' Club had been another college girl back in the old days.

In they went, between the two glass counters full of *Kaffee-kuchen und Lebkuchen und Sammet-kuchen und so weiter*, under the fine sweep of the scrollwork archway draped with more Nottingham-lace curtains, and sat down at a small table presided over by a picture of Bismarck. And then in through a door on Bismarck's right, behind the tight wet rings of hair under Theodosia's hat, there bustled a very plump and rosy little Frau Blumenbach, who cried,—

“Mein Gott! Herr Wetchwoot! It iss goot you come yus now, for I mek fresh coffee for mein *Mann*. He come so vet out of the trolley, vere he is motor-man.”

But there was plenty left, and it was soon steaming in delightful thick white cups on the snowy oil-cloth, and between the opposing cups stood quite a fortification of fresh *Apfelkuchen*, reinforced with *Kuchen* of other styles and kinds.

“Und Honig? Ja, gewiss! Und Butterbrot?”

And then Frau Blumenbach bustled back to her *Mann* on the other side of the wall-paper and there was much rattling of cups and much laughing, and Theodosia and Mr. Wedgwood spread honey and each wondered what the other really thought of such an adventure.

“If Georgia could see me, would n't she gasp!” Theodosia finally exclaimed, after they had finished talking about Frau Blumenbach's red cheeks and her subjection to her husband, and the tyranny of

the average German toward his wife, and Mr. Wedgwood's often coming here mornings for coffee when he was too late for breakfast at his boarding-house.

"Because of the amount of honey we are consuming?"

"Oh, no! She would never notice that. Have you ever seen Georgia? Georgia is my domestic partner, Miss Frame."

"Oh, Miss Frame! She is the lyric in black who inveighs against the slavery of marriage and the absurdity of love, and teaches in the high school?"

"She does do those things, and she is in mourning, poor child,— real mourning."

"And she is a lyric. Every woman is some poetic form or none at all."

"Is that your discovery?"

"Halfway. I heard my Greek professor in Oberlin College almost say it."

"Why is n't Miss Frame a sonnet? She'd much rather be something more definite and — and restrained than a lyric, I know."

He wrinkled his cherubic brow and cut the *Apfelkuchen*.

"Never in the world! She's too spontaneous and unreasoning. I've heard her at your League meetings. How can she, logically, after looking at herself in the glass?"

He was growing interesting. Theodosia's curiosity was greater than her ingenuity. What sort of poetic form was she herself, she wondered? She

took a large and luscious bite of the *Kuchen*; then rallied.

"Mercy!" she said. "You can't fit us all into any such scheme."

"I've never known it to fail! You go in perfectly, without a hitch."

He was leaning back in his chair watching her halo as she ate her cake.

"I beg pardon! I don't 'go in.' There's a wide difference between 'going in' and being 'put in.' "

"At any rate, you fit in — marvelously. You even have a title for the 'Table of Contents.' "

"As concrete as that?" she said, a little less warmly. Considering the casualness of their acquaintance, this was being personal. But then, it was no more personal than coming into the establishment Blumenbach.

He felt the frost. "May I tell you what you are and what you are entitled?" he said. "If I were n't afraid of your jeering at me, I could go on and say something quite poetical myself. I find a most advantageous opportunity." And he looked at her quite seriously through his odious *pince-nez*.

"Oh, do, for the fun of it! It's never happened to me before — to hear any one spontaneously poetical. Then we must go and I must ask you a serious question."

He drained the thick white cup.

"In my 'Dream of — of New Women,' you are an Ode to Reason."

She laughed. "That's just what I want to be, and try to be — reasonable, absolutely logical. You are very kind."

And she looked at him so rosily and graciously that he was ashamed of himself for trying to tease her. Never in all his days, coeducational and otherwise, had he met a more surprisingly unconscious and unflirtatious, and yet more alluring, young woman. She was as frank and ready as a boy, and yet dashed with piquant streaks of femininity.

In quite a boyish manner she now went to work buttoning her raincoat around her slimness and turning up the collar to the tips of her ears in the halo that was so pleasant to behold. The rain had done all sorts of fluffy, flyaway things with her hair. Then, while Frau Blumenbach was bustling round behind the glass counter, and Herr Wetchwoot was placing the princely sum of forty-five cents on the glass, she leaned over the opposite counter and studied the snowy dome and buttresses and pinnacles of a wedding cake, tipped with a pair of red sugar hearts.

"The food of slaves?" he said, holding back the door. "Was that what you were thinking?"

"Nonsense! I was calculating the cost of eggs to the square inch of such a monstrosity. Eggs are fearfully high, you know. And in the back part of my mind I was formulating a brilliant scheme."

"Am I in it?"

"More than in it! It depends entirely upon you."



"Nothing violent! I could n't, you know!"

The door went to behind them with a little jingle of its bell. The rain had resolved itself into a very respectable snow.

"In a way it is violent, because it's so utterly new. You don't mind being novel, do you?"

"Just how novel?"

"Well, for instance, would it be possible ever to have a dance for working-girls down at the Boys' Club, in that gymnasium you bolted from this afternoon? Would n't it be good for your boys as well as for our girls?"

He stopped quite still and beamed upon her.

"My, but you are more than a genius!" he cried. "It would be immense! The very thing! And I could dance with you! And the small boys could compete in trimming the hall, and there'd be lessons in courtesy all round!"

"Exactly! And you could send out the invitations —"

"Printed in my printing-shop —"

"Of course! And I'd get Annamae Pretty and Kathleen Mooney to give us a lot of names and be a sort of committee. And some of the women from the League —"

"Kathleen Mooney! She's a gay one!"

"Do you know her?"

"She knows me. Too bad, that is!"

"What is? Not Kathleen?"

"Well, not yet. But the odds are against her."

"Then we must hurry up and have the dance and brace her up. We've had her to tea, Georgia and I. She's very promising. Could we have it Washington's Birthday?"

"The very time! National holiday! It will keep lots of people out of mischief." Then, as they turned another corner and the high lights of the Lynton loomed through the blur of the snow — then, in another tone, "And we could dance, too, could n't we?" he repeated.

"Could dance! Why, we'd have to, of course,— with everybody. I'm learning the turkey trot. Do you know it?"

"I'll learn right away. Marcel Renault will show me. His father is a dancing-master. Mine was a Congregationalist minister."

"So was mine. How strange! Come in, won't you?" And she stood in the little red vestibule and produced her latchkey from some recess in the region of her heart.

"Not now," he said formally, over a depth of prudent self-denial. "May I, sometime?"

"Of course! You'll have to — about the dance, you know. Good-night! It's been quite a lark!"

"Singing high in the blue! Good-night!"

And then she was behind the gold-lettered oval of plate-glass and he was whistling "Annie Laurie" into the snow.

Upstairs, Georgia was watching pop-overs with the poems of Charlotte Perkins Gilman propped

open on the kitchen table. She was clad in a white Mother Hubbard apron and wore pink in her cheeks from frequent peeps into the oven. Her lyrical quality was distinctly domestic, and yet she was just committing to memory: —

“But bow ye down to the Holy Stove,  
The altar of the Home!”

Theodosia came running upstairs. The Lynton was not built for eternity, and no space was wasted in thickness of walls. Then the door opened and slammed, and Theodosia was calling,—

“Hello! The greatest stroke you ever heard of, my dear! Met that Boys’ Club man, that Mr. Wedgwood, and walked a few blocks with him, and he’s going to let us have dances down at the Club, for working-girls! Is n’t that great!”

“I should say! Good for you, Theo!” Georgia was *serenissima* when she said, “Theo.” “That sort of thing does some good, but not this sort, this ranting. Just as if women could n’t be free and have every right, and at the same time be good housekeepers! But how about your market-men and the nourishing meals?”

“Oh, of course!” Theodosia’s little ball of gloves rolled under the table and her hat went on top. “I have it all written down. I accomplished lots. It’s been a wonderful day.”

Georgia opened the oven door for the last time. The pop-overs had popped a delicate golden brown.

---

The serenity that comes of well-doing spread smilingly over her face.

"And the best news!" she said, gingerly picking out the hot cups with a little red holder. "Linda Rush wants us for Thanksgiving, to come out Wednesday night and stay over. And that Mr. Leaf I've told you about? He's going to have a lot of those State boys to dinner and we're to go over afterwards for nuts."

"Things are moving, are n't they?" Theodosia said, following the pop-overs.

## CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH A HERO TELLS A STORY THAT STARTS THE  
ECHOES, AND THE FIRST WOMAN PLAYS ON AN  
INSTRUMENT THAT IS ALL OUT OF TUNE

THE awakening was the keynote of the day. Carl was the auroral messenger, tiptoeing into the big southwest chamber with a basket of logs and kindling. There were few modern luxuries in the rambling old house into which Linda had gathered her wreckage, and begun another home. The furnace held no communication with mere guest-rooms, and open fires in wide fireplaces were the happy portion of guests. So small tiptoeing boy, soft rustlings of paper, stick upon stick, log upon sticks and paper, the blue spurt of a match and flames each to each, then the long shadow of the small boy all over the walls and ceiling, even to the ruffled hair that he was later going to brush so smooth for the young ladies. Then the sudden flyup of a window shade under his swift jerk, and a brown, snow-powdered mountain looking in.

"Time to wake up, mother says," came from the closing door. "I'll put a can of hot water outside here."

It was after an evening of firelight and reminiscence, with drowsy children dropping off to bed reluctantly, and much "What has ever become of?"

and "Do you happen to remember?" and "Who'd ever have thought!" Linda and Theodosia, with no overlapping years in college, knew many girls that knew each other, and found themselves near together just because of their extreme remoteness from the same point in the circle. And Linda, with little Joy in her arms, his heavy head on her bosom, his large eyes on the flames, was something of a revelation to the literal and logical Theodosia. "Tremendously appealing and overwhelmingly convincing," she had whispered to Georgia, when Linda went up to put the little chap into his crib.

Yes, it was tremendously appealing and overwhelmingly convincing, Georgia said to herself again and again long after Theodosia lay dreaming under the puff on her side of the four-poster, and the fire had flickered down into a glow of embers. Oh, but what was it that was so appealing when the very fact that it was appealing made it so convincingly wrong? It was because things were so convincingly wrong that Linda was buried in this lonely, uncomfortable old house, with five small children on her hands, with a bitter inheritance to fight and bitter memories to forget. If Linda had only not written love-letters in her lecture hours and had taken hold of the real things! If she had only realized herself and the inevitable slavery she was rushing into! And now she sat in the midst of what she had chosen and looked wonderingly and longingly at Georgia and Theodosia, and begged to



hear all the splendid things they were doing and were going to do, and made her smiling little wail about her own failure, ending always with that little refrain, "But I have the children!" Of course she had the children! That was the very point: she had the children and that finished the whole matter. And then Georgia finished the whole matter by falling asleep and dreaming that Mr. Leaf had his greenhouses full of children and that she, being the first woman, and having on — for some dream reason — Theodosia's blue kimono, must come and pick as many as she wanted before time for school. But it was an utter impossibility to go to school in the blue kimono. And the next thing she knew, that mountain was looking into the room out of a snow-sprinkled morning, and Theodosia was saying sleepily, "What under the sun did she ever marry him for? Did n't she *know*?"

After giving the theme, the children played variations on it for the morning. There was a walk over the brown fields and half up the brown mountain, with much clasping of little hands in bigger hands, and many exploits and revelations of "nice places" from Carl. Jack had stayed at home to help mother and Mrs. Cuddy get dinner. And Carl was quite explicit and businesslike in indicating the limits of mother's land and of Mr. Leaf's, and in telling how Mr. Leaf had paid off every cent of the mortgage on his land; Mrs. Tibbetts had told him so one day when she called him in to try a piece of her

mince pie. And, yes, Mr. Leaf had other workers on the gardens, but mostly boys, State kids that he sent to school in the mornings. And, gee! To-day Mr. Leaf was going to have ten more of them down from Denbigh and up that way, and at eleven o'clock there was going to be a game of football between them and the Russet Center kids! Gee, but it was nearly eleven now! And then they all turned and ran down the mountain path, Georgia with Corilla tugging tight, and Theodosia with Adelaide, and Carl ahead with wagging, leaping, barking, mongrel Skip, with his one white eye.

It was amazingly fine, that run against the wind, with a snowflake now and then stinging the cheek. As Georgia ran, with Corilla alternating hops and skips, something in her heart seemed to let go, and the burden lifted as it had not since her mother went, and she felt again what joy is like. That is the first step in getting back into the running of life after grief stops us — to be able to feel what joy is like. Then the next step is a little skip into joy, and we have a fairly good gait again. Corilla was not a bad partner for Georgia on such a run; and her small, warm, plump hand and bouncing little figure gave out a good deal of pure delight. Besides, the children's calls to each other and to the white-eyed Skip, and Skip's own faunlike antics, made a sort of enchantment there in the brown woods quite separate and apart from usual living. Did Theodosia feel it, Georgia wondered? Would

she let herself go, and get the keen sweetness out of it? Or was the sweet so keen just to her, Georgia, because of the bitterness out of which it came? And was n't it part of the sweetness that they were running right down into Mr. Leaf's meadow, with those glass houses full of warmth and fragrance and color just ahead of them? From a brown, snow-powdered mountain into the spring of Mr. Leaf's flowers! It was quite a wonderful thing to have happen to one.

Mr. Leaf, down on the ball-field the other side of the house, stopped gesticulating and yelling to the footballers, who were clamoring around him, and looked over toward the mountain. He could hear Skip's bark and the children's voices. Then he descried a ruddy-headed young woman in a white sweater flying along with Adelaide, and behind them, flying along with Corilla, a slender, dark young woman, in black except for what he could n't perceive at that distance, rose-red cheeks. At this sight Leaf's conclusion was identical with Georgia's: it was quite a wonderful thing to have happen to one!

However, Georgia had been carried beyond her conclusion into a very practical consideration. Theodosia, on arriving at the asparagus bed, and beholding on beyond the purple of cabbage and crimson of beet, although in a wilted and frost-bitten state, stopped suddenly.

"Why, what a discovery!" she cried. "Of course! I never thought of it before! Your friend Mr. Leaf

---

is the very man to supply us with vegetables for the nursing mothers! We could rely upon their being absolutely fresh."

"These are n't!" cried the exultant Carl. "These are for Mr. Leaf's pigs to come in and eat."

Theodosia laughed. "Of course I know that," she said. "But in the spring, I mean, and in the summer. We could make an arrangement. And perhaps he has eggs, too."

"He has," Carl went on proudly. "He has dandy white Wyandottes and Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island Reds. I'm going to, in the spring. Mother says I can."

"There is Mr. Leaf now," Georgia broke in with a laugh. "You can make your arrangement right away, my dear!"

And it was Mr. Leaf, absconded from football preparations and escorted by Jock, who, being a shepherd dog, took but a languid interest in conventional sports. Jock's master, glad as he was to have this wonderful thing happen, remembered regretfully the new suit up in his closet, into which he was intending to get before dinner. Every time Miss Frame had seen him, he had had on these old corduroys. But they were just the thing for a scrimmage at football, and of this radiant visitor from the mountain he had never dreamed.

And then in a minute he met them right in the middle of purple of cabbage and crimson of beet, and he was being presented to the ruddy-headed

young lady, and she was looking at him with a very friendly and frank surprise. What in the world had she expected him to be like that she should look at him with so surprised a pleasure! And somehow it was very reassuring and gratifying to be introduced to her with the formal, dignified, "May I present Mr. Leaf, Miss Pell?" in Miss Frame's quiet voice! It made him so much master of himself that he accomplished a very good bow, as good a one as if he had been in society and had had bowing masters ever since he was born. Then he fell in between Miss Pell and Miss Frame, and Corilla and Adelaide at once deserted their partners and appropriated his hands, and Carl flew on ahead to see what the fellows were fussing about, and Skip and Jock remembered a rabbit over in the cornfield.

"The boys told me that you had been up to see them in Denbigh, and had bought one of their cats," Leaf was saying to Georgia. "They are all great friends of mine, very great friends, indeed."

Georgia colored with a difference from the color of the wind.

"Oh, yes! We had a wonderful ride to find Peter," she said. "And we came on a nice lot of boys out there on that lonely street on the hilltops."

"Dr. Craig has been very good to them, they say," Leaf went on. "He has sent them up a great lot of books and a graphophone, and medicine for Miss Jessup's rheumatism."

"That is just like him," Georgia exclaimed with



gallant serenity. "He is the kindest man that ever lived. He has been kindness itself to me."

Theodosia drew nearer. "And I am always hearing of kind things he has done," she said. "The poor women that come to the League for help tell us of lots of things."

"You have known him always?" Leaf asked, a little vaguely as to who should answer his question.

Out of the moment's hesitation, it was Georgia who spoke.

"Almost always. You see, I used to live in Holton,—always until just this autumn,—and for years the Craigs lived next door. They lived there until Dr. Craig went away to college."

"Oh, I see!" Leaf said. And he was seeing double: the Now — walking there in his own gardens with this "first woman" — and the long ago of the day in the Holton hills when he gave a lift to the fisherman who had three small trout for "a girl's cat next door."

Georgia, out of *her* double sight, exclaimed gayly, looking at him with the kindest of eyes, "And you know him, too, and have known him a long time, have n't you? He told me so the other day."

Leaf kicked a pebble out of the path they had turned into. "Not known him, exactly," he said. "I met him once, long ago, when he was fishing, and we had a ride of a few miles together. That was all."

"And you gave him a lift. He says you did," she



added. "Don't be so modest about your good deeds."

"It was he that gave me the lift," Leaf said with a quiet laugh. "He did n't tell you that?"

"Never breathed it! You are both too mysterious about your well-doing."

"At any rate," Theodosia threw in, with rare tact, "you are both doing a great work in helping these State boys. Poor little chaps! My blood just boils when I think of them."

"So does mine," he said, so quietly that he belied his words.

But the chaps they were commiserating seemed in no need of sympathy, at that particular moment, at any rate. Coats and caps were flying through the air over in the ball-field, and there was a great chorus of hoarse, shrill shouting as the Denbigh champions lined up for the fray. Leaf, the umpire, hurried ahead, after disposing his guests in the seats they had declared so delightful on the stone wall. And then, presently, he called a truce for five minutes, and went into the house for a rug and Mrs. Tibbetts's blanket shawl and the afghan she had knitted for him last Christmas, and took at least two minutes over the truce wrapping up the stone wall and the spectators sitting upon it. Then the footballers fell to, and there was a fine smell of roasting turkey coming from Mrs. Tibbetts's kitchen to inspire them to doughty deeds. Miss Frame followed the game with a great show of ignorant

enthusiasm, and Miss Pell stood up and waved her afghan and shrieked like a good fellow just at the right places. Now and then, over in the kitchen doorway, there was a touch of magenta, and Mrs. Tibbetts, in the little three-cornered shawl, peered out under her hand at the yelling, tumbling combatants. Once, she called a breathless hero from the field and sent back a plate of sugared doughnuts. The umpire, with cowlick tossing like Achilles's plume, was all over the field, in and out of the surging fray, and leaning on the stone wall to explain to Miss Frame that there was no possible chance for any one to be hurt, that they were n't playing the Rugby game, and to agree with Miss Pell that the Denbigh boys were putting up a pretty good fight.

"I never have understood it and I've always been afraid," Georgia confessed. "Even in the big games when I was in college,— I used to go every time,— I made just a big bluff of being a sports-woman. I was always frightened to death." And she smiled out of the depths of Mrs. Tibbetts's blanket shawl and poked a hairpin back into the braids that were loosened from running.

"Oh, I adore it!" exclaimed Theodosia, with a little shriek of ecstasy. "Just see him! Just see him kick that goal! Is n't he glorious! Is n't he!"

But the umpire was running to the scrimmage that followed. It was quite masterly, the manner in which he picked out the legs and arms from the

heap and stood them up as boys, and then stood himself, Jovelike, in their yelling midst and settled the question for them.

"He's pretty fine, your friend," Theodosia said. "He is n't just a market-gardener at all. I never was so surprised."

"He is n't my friend," Georgia protested. "I've just chanced on him twice. He's Linda's and the children's. But he is interesting."

"Tremendously! Even the cowlick! And those nice, muscular brown hands! Hands tell a lot to me always."

"His hands can make anything grow, Linda says. They have shaken hands with Ceres, I suppose, as Professor Norris used to say in Botany of good gardeners."

"And for our work, he's a real find," Theodosia went on, disregarding the classics. "There! That's a tie, and the time's up."

Just why it was a tie Georgia could n't see, but there was no mistaking the meaning of Jack's swift approach with the far, shrill cry of "Dinner's ready! Mother says come quick while it's hot." It was a simple matter to look intelligent with waiting dinner as a certainty, when Mr. Leaf came running over to them, breathlessly protesting that they must n't think of going until they had been in to get some flowers, and that those chaps were pretty good fighters after all. Theodosia agreed knowingly and brilliantly that they certainly were,

---

and then Georgia postponed the flowers till afternoon when they were all coming over to have some nuts — if Mr. Leaf remembered the pleasant invitation that had come through Mrs. Rush. *Did* Mr. Leaf remember?

"I'm counting on it," he said, coloring quickly. "Not much danger of my forgetting! It will be more wonderful than you can understand." And quite daringly and impulsively — never could he have compassed such a thing upon reflection — he looked directly into Georgia's eyes, and there was the very faintest shading upon the word "you." How could she understand what it was to have the "first woman" come into your house and sit by your fire and eat your nuts!

Evidently she did n't understand, for she only smiled back at him with a perfectly casual friendliness and put her hand down around Jock's caressing nose, and then turned with Theodosia and the children off toward Mrs. Rush's turkey and cranberry sauce.

Three hours later, when she was actually putting her foot upon his threshold, she was as little aware of the tremendousness of the moment. With her came Linda, quite unflurried and fresh after her dressing and sewing and basting of his turkeyship, and so thankful that Mrs. Cuddy would stay and do the dishes and keep her ears open for any sound from little Joy having his nap upstairs. If there were any sound, Mrs. Cuddy was to ring the dinner bell

out of the back door. The sound of the bell would easily carry in that still, cold air, and Linda's ears were wonderful where the children were concerned. Why, it almost seemed as if she could hear little Joy cry even at that distance, if he needed her. But of course Georgia and Theodosia would laugh at such motherly foolishness. So Linda explained as they went over the fields after dinner to eat nuts at Mr. Leaf's. But they had not laughed at all. They had been allowed in to see little Joy asleep in his small bed, with his white, blue-veined lids so lightly shut over his big eyes, and a small red engine still clasped in his thin little hands. Most beloved of all toys was that little red engine.

After the neighborly fashion Linda went in by the back door, holding it open till her procession had filed into the big old kitchen, where Mrs. Tibbetts had stacked the dishes in the sink for a later washing so as not to lose a moment of the festivities. Just at that particular moment the festivities were by no means of a boisterous or highly illuminated nature. The minute Theodosia, the last to enter, had closed out the dusk and the cold, they realized quiet, and then firelight in the keep-room beyond, and then, as they stood breathless and listening, a voice going on and on, telling something. Linda, light as a child on her tireless feet, tiptoed nearer and Georgia followed. Now it was quite easy to see and to understand what was happening. Mr. Leaf, lying on the hearthrug, was telling a story to



---

the wearied warriors of the morning. His head was propped on his hand, and, except for occasional glances toward the front door, he was looking right into the blazing logs just as if he were reading every word in the leaping flames. All around him on the flowery rug and the rag carpet reposed the champions, some stretched out like the story-teller, others hugging knees or nursing chins, all staring flameward, too, except for occasional glances toward Mr. Leaf, lying there so quietly, and yet doing such exciting things with that fagot-boy who had never had a chance. And it looked pretty much as if the fagot-boy were going to find a chance; not that anything had come his way the least little bit, — he was always up against it somehow, — but still you could just bet on that fagot-boy! Behind the champions, Mrs. Tibbetts, in her best black henrietta, sat on the horsehair sofa under the engraving of the Rock of Ages; and beside her, with his crutches at his side, sat the lame boy from Denbigh, whose legs found the floor a quite impossible seat. Mrs. Tibbetts, it must be confessed, could have stood no very severe examination upon the adventures of the fagot-boy; for now and then the blinking of the flames sent her off into a cat-nap, as it did Jock, stretched, nose on paws, close to the story-teller. And over all the company played the long, dancing shadows, up the walls with the faded landscape paper, and over the low ceiling — a strangely assorted company of shadows!



Mr. Leaf's back was toward the kitchen — who would ever have supposed that his guests would not have come in by the front door! — and he was too far away in his story to hear the soft steps behind him. But Mrs. Tibbetts heard, and her hands flew up and a word almost flew out of her mouth before Linda's warning finger composed her back into a smile and a gesture of welcome. Then the newly arrived guests sat anywhere on the outskirts of the encampment.

Somehow Georgia's heart beat close under her collar and a quick dimness came into her eyes as she sank down on the floor and leaned her head against the old square piano. Her alert sensitiveness had at once caught the meaning of it all, the pathos of that company under the spell of Leaf's quiet voice. Through the tears that had come so unbidden and so suddenly, she looked at the flames over the top of Mr. Leaf's head, where the cowlick had broken away from the careful noon combing. And Mr. Leaf was saying: —

“And just then he came to the bridge and leaned on the railing a moment to rest, and he caught sight of himself in the water below. Those were his eyes looking up at him so clearly from the ripples, and those were his strong shoulders under the heavy load of fagots. And that was his forehead with the new line in it that had come from wondering how he was going to find a chance. And what a big load of fagots it was! And then he began to wonder

how many loads of fagots he had carried that year and the year before and the year before that and the year before that — all the years away back until he could n't remember. As far, far back as he could remember, he had been just a fagot-boy, going to the woods in the morning, gathering a pile of sticks, throwing it over his shoulder, carrying it along this very road down to the brickyards where the rich people made bricks to build beautiful houses, and then going back to the woods for another load, and so on and so on, year in and year out. That was all there was to remember and to look forward to — just fagots for bricks for rich people's houses. And then had come that wonderful day not so long ago when he had met the prince lost from his hunting-party, and the prince had talked of the kingdom he was getting ready for. Why had n't he, the fagot-boy, a kingdom to look forward to? He had as good a right to one as the prince had. Who had loaded him with these fagots and then gone off and forgotten him, and kept him from having not only a kingdom but even a chance?"

Georgia's heart skipped another beat. It was his story, his own story and Howard Craig's, that he was telling. Howard Craig was the prince with his kingdom. Again the triangle was complete, she and Craig and — and the fagot-boy.

"And suddenly his heart grew very big and very brave," Leaf was going on. "And he put his hand

into his ragged pocket and took out his jack-knife and cut the withes that held the fagots, and the whole load fell off his shoulders, splash down into the deep river. And then he straightened his shoulders and looked up at the blue sky, and then on along the road leading off over the hills and far away. And he clenched his fists hard and followed the road, and said out loud, so loud that a big black crow in a high pine tree heard him and cawed back at him: 'I'm going to make my own kingdom. Then it will really be mine. Nobody can keep me just a fagot-boy. It's — it's up to me!' "

Just here, so splendid was the moment, the lame boy on the couch clapped his hands vigorously and shouted, "Bully for him! Ain't he a winner!" And then everybody turned round and laughed and clapped and looked at the guests, and Mr. Leaf sprang to his feet, smoothing back the cowlick and coloring as hot as the hickory coals, and crying with a laugh:—

"Why, Mrs. Rush! Such a flank movement is n't fair! I have n't taken my eye off that front door. And I'd quite given you up." He was laughing to Linda, but his eyes included Theodosia, and then Georgia emerging from her shadowy corner. "Miss Pell! Miss Frame! Do have more comfortable seats. More logs on, boys. Make a big blaze and bring out the nuts. Mrs. Tibbetts will help you."

When Mrs. Tibbetts presently came back with

her attendant boys bearing nuts and implements and plates, there was quite a little ceremony of presentation.

"Miss Pell! Miss Frame! This is Mrs. Tibbetts," Leaf found himself saying with a fine ease that amazed him, "and Mrs. Tibbetts is my kith and kindred and home circle, besides being my chum and my friend."

"Pleased to know you," Mrs. Tibbetts avowed with old-time politeness. Then added, her keen blue eyes brimming, "Why, Billy Leaf, you do beat all, calling folks names! How's a body to know what I am ef you talk so!"

"I think I know," Georgia said, letting go the knotted old hand a little lingeringly.

"It's a good deal to be, all at once, is n't it, Mrs. Tibbetts!" Theodosia said heartily. "It's quite composite."

But the crackling of logs and of laughter, and the cracking of nuts, ended the introducing, and took Georgia to the hassock by the fire to give news of Peter to the Denbigh boys, and Theodosia to the middle of a group on the hearthrug, to discuss the morning's game.

"Which to you is the handsomest?" Mrs. Tibbetts whispered to Linda, tête-à-tête on the sofa.

"Oh, Miss Frame!" whispered back loyal Linda. "And she's a dear, too. Miss Pell is stunning, though. Such hair! And they are both so awfully clever. They're Woman's Rights, you know, 'way

up in the work. They have n't any use for men, either of 'em."

"I wonder!" Mrs. Tibbetts said slowly and vaguely.

"Will you? would you — play for the singing?" Leaf was saying, leaning down to Georgia on her hassock. "The piano is all out of tune, but the boys have lots of voice. Would you? It will be the very best part of the whole day if you would!"

Georgia looked away a moment. She could n't, of course! She had n't yet touched the keys since — Then she found herself looking back into his eyes and saying with a little laugh, "Sore throat, has it? The piano? Of course I will. I'd love to hear all their voice."

Under cover of the "Star Spangled Banner" that soon shook the rafters of the old parlor, Mrs. Tibbetts drew near Leaf, leaning on the piano. "Is she — her?" she whispered, her hand on his shoulder.

He put his hand over hers, his mouth close to her ear. "Yes," he whispered back with a laugh.

Afterwards, when he led her with Linda and Theodosia between the carnations and roses in the dusk of the greenhouses, lighted only by his lantern, he cut recklessly right and left with a fine forgetfulness of to-morrow's markets, and his heart kept beating ungrammatically and recklessly, "She is her! She is her!"

## CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH FORLORN PEOPLE ARE GIVEN WHAT THEY  
WANT, NOT WHAT THEY NEED, BUT THE HEROINE  
GIVES A HERO NOTHING

"It's mighty little! I wish it were hundreds!" Georgia was saying, putting the bill into Sebastian's hand. "But it will make a little Christmas for some elderly person — some elderly woman, please, Sister."

Sebastian's thin face wrinkled into a smile.

"For several elderly women," she said. "And it shall buy them something they want dreadfully — not something they need."

"Something frivolous, please, Sister, if that's what they want."

"Exactly! That's just what I mean. Old Mrs. Canby wants a brown false front, like the hair of her young days that she tells us about."

"To face the world with?"

"Yes, when she's discharged. And Miss Penrose longs for a pretty nightdress, after all these weeks in bed."

"Two, please, Sister, one with pink and one with blue ribbons."

They were standing just inside the big front door of the hospital. To enter at all had taken every bit of Georgia's courage; she had waited on the



threshold with a sick pang of remembrance. Then Sister Sebastian, by some good fortune, had opened the door, and there had been an immediate explanation of the errand. However, in addition to the firm, encouraging clasp of Sebastian's hand, there were other conditions that took away the fearful familiarness of the place. The wide hall was hung with ropes of Christmas green, and the fragrance of cedar and juniper and hemlock came from the open door of the chapel down the right-hand corridor, where the Sisters were trimming the chancel. So joyous a fragrance must surely reach up into the wards and have some curative powers. And in addition to Christmas fragrance indoors there was the shine of real Christmas snow under the street lights whenever the front door was opened, and as much hurry and flurry in the twilight of Christmas Eve as in the midday of an ordinary time. Nothing could possibly be less harrowing and yet be the same.

"Oh, but God is good!" Sebastian was exclaiming with a swift departure from the concrete. "You feel it always, of course, just as you hear always the sound of the river. But sometimes, when the wind's in the right direction, it's so near. And at Christmas time, it's nearest of all. And now here you are with your generosity, and Dr. Craig —"

Her steady gray eyes were luminous.

"Dr. Craig!" Georgia broke in. "Has he done something beautiful?"

"Beautiful! Wonderful! Such a Christmas for

the sick children and the little ones out at the Orphanage!" Sebastian's enthusiasm had given a gay color to her thin cheeks.

"Splendid of him!" Georgia exclaimed, feeling herself catching Sebastian's color.

"Such a good man! And such a future before him! Such skill and such tenderness! But you know, dear child!"

"Yes, I know!" Georgia said with a quick breath. And then, when she turned in farewell, with a wild impulse to run away from the pain of remembering how good he had been, she felt both her hands in Sister Sebastian's and a kiss on each cheek.

"God bless you, my dear, and give you real Christmas peace! Come again soon, and see Mrs. Canby in her new front and Miss Penrose in the pretty nightdress. Will you?"

"Yes, I will!" Georgia promised. And then the door closed and she was going down the steps and creaking off along the snowy sidewalk toward home.

She had done the thing she had so longed to do and had so dreaded. Ever since she had come back from taking her mother home to the quiet hillside cemetery in Holton, where lay other generations of Frames, she had longed and feared to enter the hospital. There was the longing to be near those who had known her mother during those last radiant, poignant days, when her spirit seemed to spread luminous wings and poise for flight, and there was the fear of drawing too close to the vast emptiness

afterwards. But Christmas had sent her there without any further excuse for not daring, and school payday had filled her lean little purse so that there was a real reason for going.

The streets were blithe and pleasant with their hurrying crowds, and the bells ringing six o'clock from the City Hall tower, and chiming the Angelus from the Holy Angels up Lime Street. Somehow Christmas began to get into her bones as she went briskly along past wreathed windows, in and out of the crowds with their bundles and their laughter. But below the peace, there was the sense of the Christmas of a year before, of the lonely evening before her at the apartment. Theodosia had gone to Boston to Christmas with a venerable aunt, who, at intervals, forgave her niece's advanced theories of living. There would be the late mail to open, anyhow; that would be cheerful, perhaps, with possible remembrances from her mother's old friends and her own. And then there was a bite of supper to get, and the packages to be tied up for Mrs. Pretty and Annamae and the Rush children. Oh, there would be plenty to do to keep busy and not remember other Christmases! And there were other lonely people in town to-night. What was Howard Craig doing to get Christmas into his bones? Surely he deserved to be full of the joy of the season after his splendid giving. There were scores of his friends for him to celebrate with, of course. He had told her casually of the Country Club where

---

he played golf in his rare leisure, and of the Essex Club where he went for whist, and she had seen his name in the "Social Column" of the "Daily Dispatch" as dining at big houses on the Boulevard. No doubt there were women enough who were willing enough to make Christmas merry for him. But just new friends. And then she remembered, with a sudden warmth in her veins, his eyes that night on the ride from Denbigh when he had said so unsmilingly as he looked quite away from his wheel, and quite fearlessly into her own eyes, "But you do mean something. There's no use, absolutely, in trying to get away from the fact. I can see now that you have always meant something." No matter if she was quite separate and apart from all sentiment and that sort of thing, it was something to be glad of and proud of, to mean something to this man who was so wise and so learned and so skillful, and at the same time so tender and so royal in his giving, to this man that any woman in town would welcome as a friend or a lover. And he was as lonely as she herself was, this merry Christmas! And of all women in the whole town, she — yes, she — was the one he would rather spend Christmas with. Feminist as she was, new woman to the bottom of her soul, still she kept the pleasant realization quite hospitably in her mind. But after Christmas, she would make a bitter, ringing speech at Headquarters about the slavery of sentiment and the fallacy of love. She would show other

women how to keep off the quicksands. That would be her atonement for this riot of sentiment on her own part. And then suddenly, with the waywardness of idle thoughts, hers flew off from so personal considerations, and in a swift, irrelevant flash, she saw the other side of Craig's triangle—Leaf's parlor in the firelight, Leaf's face in a lantern flash out of the darkness as he cut her roses in the twilight, Thanksgiving night.

The flash in her thought was repeated in the flash of the vestibule light of the Lynton as she turned the corner and opened the plate-glass door. Halfway up the stairs to her top floor, she was aware of some excitement above. There were voices in the top floor hallway and some one going and coming, and presently there came down to her an odor not usual in apartment houses where painted yellow pine masquerades brazenly as English oak and dinners proclaim themselves in varying moods. She sniffed wonderingly. Could it be hyacinths? It must be, else she would never see so vividly the south end of the garden at home. Hyacinths!

And just then Mrs. Pretty leaned over the banisters on the landing above — Mrs. Pretty in knobby curlpapers and a kimono jacket of hyacinthine purple, and cried out gayly, —

“Well, Miss Frame! This does beat all! Looks like I was meddling, but there was n't nothin' else to do. There they was all standin' out on the back porch by your door just as if they was dropped there



from Heaven pinned up in brown paper. An' thinks I, it's gettin' colder every minute an' her not at home an' no tellin' when she's a-comin' an' her back door locked tight. An' I says to Annamae, an' her hurryin' to get off to the supper and dance, I says, 'I'm just goin' t' carry 'em right into her front door. It'll look reel gay for Christmas. An' here they all are, except the little balsam pine. That's settin' right out close to the swill-pail. An' me not fit to be seen by no one. But I just can't work round in corsets, can you, Miss Frame?'"

Georgia sank on the top step amazedly. Mrs. Pretty set down the pink tulip.

"I don't wonder you're about flabbergasted, Miss Frame. Ain't they the loveliest ever! An' not a smitch of a card or nothin' else sayin' who they're from."

Georgia smiled and reveled in the hyacinths and daffodils and tulips that encircled her modest threshold. "'The loveliest ever,'" she repeated. "They surely are, Mrs. Pretty! And you're a dear to bring them in out of the cold."

"Ain't he devoted, though, Miss Frame!" Anna-mae called saucily, and then appeared in swift flight for her engagement, buttoning smart white gloves. "And ain't my furs dandy! They're mommer's present. Reel squirrel. An' Kathleen gave me these beads. Don't you love them!" And from the depths of her squirrel tippet she drew a long string of coralish beads tied in a fetching knot. "I'm



crazy about coral. I gave Kathleen silk stockings, she's so crazy about dancing."

As pink as the tulip were Annamae's cheeks as she rattled on, looking back over her gray squirrel shoulder.

"They're very becoming," Georgia called after her. "Merry Christmas, Annamae." Then in a lower tone to Mrs. Pretty, "Annamae's as lovely as the flowers, Mrs. Pretty. She ought to make a lot of herself."

"That's what I'm always tellin' her, steddier keepin' company with that Kathleen Mooney an' her crowd. I tell Annamae runnin' the streets's no way in the world to get a husband. Steady fellers are lookin' for steady wives."

"But even if she did n't get a husband," Georgia said, a little scornfully, rising and producing her latchkey from the lean little purse. "One can be lots of fine things without having a husband."

Mrs. Pretty laughed and twisted a curl-paper tighter. "Sure they can, Miss Frame. But lands! You know how it is yourself. Look at them flowers right there before you. Men just won't let a girl alone if she's got anything to her. An' Annamae has, if I do say so myself."

"Of course she has, Mrs. Pretty. That's just it. She's got a lot to her. In a little while she would find that she had so much that a husband would be the last thing in the world she needed to make her happy."

Mrs. Pretty's short blunt hands, with the black celluloid thimble on the thimble finger, were spread on her ample purple hips as she chuckled: —

"Sakes alive, Miss Frame! You do make me laugh. When you take off that black you'll feel different. You ain't one to preach not marryin' with all them flowers around your door. Help you carry 'em in?"

"Oh, no, no, Mrs. Pretty! I love to do it. I'll see you again to say 'Merry Christmas.'" And she had her door open and reached up to turn on the light in the little hallway. Then she waited a minute till she heard Mrs. Pretty's door slam across the hall, before beginning to dispose her flower pots.

Four hyacinths, four tulips, four daffodils there were in the gay company. And when the daffodils glowed on the far end of the piano, and the hyacinths made a little pool of fresh sweetness on one window-sill and the tulips flaunted gray-leafed and gay on the other, there was the little balsam pine to bring in from the back porch and establish in the brass jardiniere by the fireplace. So full of fragrance were the rooms that the company seemed almost to speak and to say very genial things, as Georgia went busily to and fro, taking off her things, touching a match to the logs, and finally slipping into her white corduroy house dress that was so comfortable to work in. And then entered Peter with singing purrs and smelt daintily of the balsam pine and rubbed his back and ears in its low branches and

sat himself down before the new fire and blinked upon it benignly.

And there was n't "a smitch of a card or anything else sayin' who they were from!" No more successful than Mrs. Pretty in her search was Georgia in hers for some word hidden under leaves or in thick branches. But there was little need for her searching, except for the added zest of finding just what sort of thing he would write, or could write, or would dare to write, this strangely isolated young man of the gardens at the foot of the mountain, who had already dared to call her "first woman" and had looked at her out of his melancholy eyes as if he wondered what delightful thing might happen next. Never in all her experience with men — and she had permitted herself a wide range of amusement as part of her equipment for being a more loyal woman — never had she met one so unhampered, so elemental, so separated. It was as if a faun in his own woodlands were acquiring a soul, in addition to a mind inherited from some ancestral divinity, and were so finding in her the "first woman." The faun in him had suffered and the suffering had made him a man. And from him the flowers had come, to her, "first woman." Always more interesting than the men themselves had been the discovery of just what she meant — not how much she meant — to them. It had been vastly amusing to behold herself draped and posed in the ideals of those who had been her friends or more

than friends. But never once during the ten years since her realization of herself at that college "Prom," when she had been quite the rage, — never once had she "cared" the least little bit. From proud habit, she reasserted to herself her heart-freeness; but, as once before that night, she remembered Howard Craig and the ride from Denbigh. Still, there was a difference in their relation: force of circumstances, associations, common memories, his adorable goodness to her mother. No wonder he made a little rebellion in her well-ordered thoughts. This other relation — being "first woman" to one who had been a faun — this was novel, interesting, stimulating — part of the life in which she had good times, wonderful times, with her mind, and his mind, experimenting with life, getting something out of life for its enrichment. That was living — that was having wings, as her mother used to say — that was flying above the atmosphere.

In the little exaltation of her moment, she opened the dining-room window and let in the sting of the cold, and then started her coffee percolator. Tea for supper would be a desecration. It was too feminine. And yet Peter at her feet seemed no desecration when she brought her little tray of sandwiches and fruit in by the fire in the living-room, among the flowers. Peter had cream in a saucer on the hearth, while his mistress sipped her coffee and was not sorry Theodosia was gone on this first Christmas after the change. It was much better to be

alone when there was so much to remember. And then she finished her supper and pushed away the little table and leaned back in her low chair in the silence of the fire and the softly blowing curtain in the dining-room.

A year ago they were doing this and that — and two years ago they were in Rome, her year of holiday — and three years ago — and four years ago — and — and — So she told off the Christmases away back to the days when she used to see the shine of Howard Craig's big Christmas tree through the lace curtains at the Craig windows, and Judge Craig used to send her mother a box of Florida oranges, and she used to have her own small Christmas stocking at her mother's hearth. Nothing seemed so sacred, so intimate as that stocking. No shimmer of taper and glimmer of gold on the royalest of trees approached the beauty of it! And then her thought traveled on to times more remote than she could remember, and she recalled the old Christmas letter in the middle drawer of the desk, that she had chanced upon that day in October when the furniture had come from Holton. It was easy to find on the top of the little pile, and a turning of the logs made reading quite easy, even of the faded writing on the thin old sheet. How natural and simple its beginning, just as if it might have been dated then, in ink still wet. Oh, the eternalness of things, the irrevocableness of things! What a sorry scheme it all was! And her mother wrote on that



---

Christmas Eve so long before, to her far-away sailor husband,—

“How can I have a merry Christmas without you! The merry bells of Yule have little sweetness for this maiden all forlorn. But then I am so relieved about our darling little one. She is well again after a really ill week. Still, Christmas without you is an empty show, a Christmas tree without any lights. And when I think that we shall not begin the New Year together — ”

And just here Howard Craig pushed the button down in the Pompeian vestibule, behind the gold-lettered plate-glass, under the little cards that announced Miss Pell and Miss Frame as residents of the pressed-brick pile. He was wondering anxiously whether he had got off every faintest whiff of carbolic acid after that operation. And then a fear displaced the wonder—suppose Georgia—oh, the delight of daring so to call her voicelessly!—suppose Georgia had gone off somewhere, God only knows where, to spend Christmas!

But she had n't!

“Hello!” very faintly.

“You, Miss Frame?” He knew full well that it was she, felt it, sensed it, down to the very ends of his hair under his close seal cap. A hundred new senses originated spontaneously to assure him that it was she!

“Yes. Who is it, please?” less firmly, more assertively. She, too, was quite sure that it was Miss Frame.



"It's I — Howard Craig. May I come up — just a minute?"

"Oh — yes! Do! Of course! I'm very glad!" with a whole chromatic scale of shadings.

And up he went, while she neglected such vital things as removing Peter's empty saucer from the hearth and her tray from the tea-table; and, hiding her old letter in her blouse, rushed into her room to see that her hair was n't too dreadful.

It was n't at all too dreadful, Craig thought when she let him in. Those heavy dark braids close around her small head, roughened a little and curly over her small ears,— those braids were the very same that used to hang down her back in the Holton days and fly out so wildly when she scampered away from boys. Not that he was in the least reminiscent, actively, when she opened the door and held out her hand, and let him follow her into that amazingly springlike living-room, with its low firelight and its sleeping roll of Peter on the hearth. He was all there in mind and body.

"Come in advance or lingered?" he said. "Is it always spring here?"

"Except when it's dead of winter," she said. "A very merry Christmas to you, anyhow. Sit down." And she sat again in her low chair and the firelight turned her white gown a delicate apricot.

"I will — a moment. It's wonderful here." And he swept the shadowy room with his glance as he threw his furs off and sat down opposite her. There

was much fresh air about him and much strength and bigness as he held his hands to the blaze. "I like that saucer on the hearth tremendously — and Peter — and the tray where you had supper — and all. Did you fix it up — just this way, quickly, when you heard me? It was pretty nice of you if you did."

"I was lazy and disorderly and did n't put things away when I heard you, as I should have done."

He gave a little laugh. "Honest, what did you do between hearing and letting me in? Wring your hands?"

"Honest? It's a confession. I went in and looked at myself in the glass."

"Next time wait and look — at me."

"You would n't be so truthful!"

"If you'd let me — more so." He lifted his level brows a little, tentatively.

"And I poked the fire," she went on calmly, "to save argument. Men always want to poke the fire because they think women can't. The other day our Principal, Mr. Gates, came here to talk business, and I found him poking the fire."

He drew a quick breath. "I came on business, too. Where is Miss Pell?"

"In Boston, being filial to an old aunt. I'm sorry."

"I'm not — except about the business. It can't go through without Miss Pell, I suppose."

"Would n't I do, temporarily?"

"Permanently, as far as I'm concerned. But

you would n't be a party to it alone. I know you of old."

"I'm vastly more emancipated than when you knew me. Is it some desperate case?"

"Very desperate. It's a case of starvation."

"Try me."

He leaned down and caught small Peter up in his big hand. Peter squirmed sleepily, then cuddled in his elbow, liking it and the gentle stroke from the big hand on his small fluffy back.

"Very well, then. You'll come to dinner with me to-morrow, at my house. Fow is there to wait on us. You will?"

She flushed rose above her severe white. "Of course I won't — because people are stupid — and I'm a teacher. I'm tempted — just to dare it. In ten years from now it will be all right. You'll see!"

He colored hot. "It's a long time to wait. But you promise? In ten years?"

"Of course. By that time people will be educated up to realizing that women are as free as men, and there'll be an end of gossips."

"Oh, I see." Peter was stretched ecstatically along his gray coat-sleeve, purring and blinking. "I see." He drew another deep breath. "I knew you were n't going to Mrs. Rush's. The little chap has had a bad week of it. And I thought that somehow — somehow — you and I might Christmas together — this year."

"But you — you belong to so many people on

Christmas. Don't they want you at Judge Lynn's and Mrs. Giles's and Miss Cabot's?"

"They've asked me. How did you know?"

"Guessed from the 'Social Column.' You should go to some of those places, a man of your prominence."

"Should I? It's too late. I've refused. I'm going with you — somewhere. That's settled." He got up and put Peter gently back on the warm hearth. Then he frowned a moment into the fire. "Suppose — suppose I should ask some one else to my house — would you come? I think — I think your mother — would like it — if you came."

She sprang up and held out her hand. "Of course I'll come," she said. "You're dear and good to ask me. Of course. I'd love to."

"Thank you," he said quietly, holding her hand a moment. "And you'll trust me to find a chaperon. It will be all right."

"Of course it will be all right. At two o'clock?"

"Yes, at two o'clock. I'll come at a quarter of, with the chaperon." He was getting into his furs, his shadow long up and down the walls and ceiling. Away from the glow of the fire he was pale.

"And little Joy is worse? I've been too busy with exams. at school to go out to Linda's."

"Not so well, poor little chap. You're mighty good to come — mighty good." He was drawing on his left glove, the little line between his brows. "And it's tremendously nice here."

“Good!” she exclaimed, with a suddenness and a warmth that frightened her out of herself. “Good! Oh, if you only knew one half how good you — you have been — and are.”

“Keep me so!” he said tensely, bending to kiss the hand that had gone out again to him with her hot words.

When the door had closed, she sank down on the floor by sleepy Peter and hid her face in her hands.

“I wish I were — were just Annamae,” she was whispering.

## CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH MEET HEROES, HEROINE, JUST A WOMAN,  
AND MANY UNDERCURRENTS

A CHAPERON! That was what he had promised. And just eighteen and three quarter hours in which to find, secure — impossible! Just eighteen and three quarter hours in which to create such an individual! A chaperon for himself and Georgia Frame! Like trying to fence in two of the Great Lakes! Who, in the name of all that was conventional and becoming and seemly, who in the whole city was there that would n't desecrate this blessed occasion when the dweller of his dreams was to become, for a few blissful fractions of eternity, a guest at his table!

In and out of office visits, talk of grippe and anæmia and neurasthenia, writing of potent hieroglyphics on small oblongs of linen parchment, stethoscope poundings and wheezings, finger-tips on wild or tame or weary or hopeful pulses — in and out of it all, the doctor was turning over the situation in the back part of his mind. Rather, perhaps, his heart was pondering the situation, while his mind was deducting and inducting symptoms. Once, when his ears were deafened to everything but the languid heart-beats of an old woman, shriveled and black-shawled and thin-haired, with faded blue



eyes, his own heart obtruded itself inexcusably with a suggestion of Sebastian — a wild, quite irrelevant suggestion. He put it away and smiled into the old woman's frightened face.

"You may outlive me," he said gently, taking his stethoscope out of his ears. "Let your children wait on you, though. You'll spoil them if you don't."

"Oh, not the loikes o' thim! They do be after waitin' on me whin they come from worruk, the poor things. But it's the high steps an' draggin' the coal."

"Get lazy and stay in bed till the winter's over," he went on, giving her a little white box. "If you were my mother I'd make you."

"God bless you! It's a foine son I'd be havin'!"

In the next interval he listened to his own heart. Yes, but preposterous, of course! Sebastian was just the one, the only one that would not take the shimmer and shine of heaven off those fractions of eternity when Georgia Frame was going to eat the turkey that he, Howard Craig, was going to carve for her. But then, of course, it was as impossible to procure Sebastian as to expect the cool white statue of the Blessed Virgin to step down from her pedestal in the hospital chapel and come to his house for Christmas dinner. Yet it was a pleasant thought, her fitness for the august position of chaperon for Georgia Frame on this blessed occasion. It would be pleasanter still to tell Sebastian how much he had wanted her.

Late that night, long after Sebastian had wrinkled her thin face into a laugh over his foolish notion, and long after he had quite exhausted his imagination in testing his friends and acquaintances in the attempt to find a suitable candidate, an illumination came to him. He was sitting only in low firelight in his library. The many-chimed clock was presently going to declare it Christmas morning. He had been trying to read George Bernard Shaw; then had given up trying and turned off the reading-light. The firelight was very friendly and playful with the rather somber rows of books, and the two or three "originals" of the Barbizon school in their gilt frames, and a marble of the stern-lipped young Cæsar. Then it died down into a glow that made the corners less empty, and filled the couches and deep chairs with a shadowiness that could easily be fancied into shapes — into a shape there in that low gondola chair — a woman's shape, slender, dark-haired, in severe white — a very high-spirited, defiant, mocking shape, the materialization of which would scoff at him for sitting in the ember-light sentimentalizing about her. Sentimentalizing! And then his mind sped fleetly along its familiar track, back to the Holton days and the little girl next door. Did she know — mocking, high-spirited shape there in the gondola chair — did she know now why the little girl next door had fled so wildly for refuge from boys; why her mother had given her, so young, a philosophy of bitterness; why, to her mother, the

great round world was as dead a thing as the scarred, dead moon looking whitely over the tree-tops? Did she know the whole story, the old, cruel idyl of cherry-tree land that had broken her mother's heart after the years of waiting? He could remember the day it had been in the papers, that Captain Frame had died in a teahouse in Kioto in the midst of the dancing and singing; and he could remember standing at the window looking over at the little brown cottage, wondering that it looked just the same as before, and that the little girl was playing quite as usual under the lilacs. And her mother had sat all day behind the clematis on the porch, rocking, rocking in a noisy chair.

All this he could remember as vividly as if it had happened yesterday. Did she have it to remember in all its bitter detail? And was that why she was so ungracious a shape in the big chair, never relenting to his fancy and letting him lean forward and take her hand, or, still in wilder fancy, standing there on the hearth by his side and letting him — Then with entire irrelevance a ray of light illuminated his dreaming. She was coming to dinner, the real she, and there was to be a chaperon. A chaperon? Why, Leaf, of course, and the old lady who lived with him, the nice old gray head at the kitchen window behind the pots of poinsettia and the Christmas wreath. She had been there that very morning as he whirled by on his way to Mrs. Rush's. Georgia and Leaf and himself, the triangle complete

at his table. And would n't she be dumbfounded and interested! He knew her well enough to be very sure that she would be immensely interested.

The many-chimed clock sang Christmas morning. His pipe was out. The embers were almost gray. He got up and, turning to the window, threw up the sash. A white star looked in. From far down the avenue came the broken melody of carols. He wondered if Georgia could hear them.

And at one-forty-five P.M. sharp that day he got his triangle.

"I said I'd get a chaperon," he was laughing, as the plate-glass door swung back behind them into the vestibule. "I told you I would, did n't I? I've got two."

"Yes, of course, but who — who under — It is n't, really! Why how in the world did you?" And she stopped amazedly, red through her black tissue veil. "You, Mrs. Tibbetts! And — and Mr. Leaf! Is n't this just too wonderful!"

"Not too wonderful!" came from Leaf, hatless in a minute, cowlick rampant, emerging from rugs and the front seat. "Nothing's too wonderful — now!"

"Well, I declare! Who'd 'a' thought it!" from Mrs. Tibbetts, jet bonneted and rosy out of many rugs on the back.

"Anyhow, it's mightily all right!" from Craig, tucking Georgia in on the other back seat and springing to his wheel. "It's a real Holton party."

The dinner-table was resplendent, of course, for Fow had had *carte blanche*; only to make it gay and splendid had been his instructions. And it was gay and splendid. Mrs. Tibbetts, coming in timidly with Georgia, actually blinked at the glittering circle of candles around the big cut-glass bowl of scarlet berries, and at the shine of silver and more cut-glass on the heavy carved buffet, and the blaze of electric light in the cut-glass chandelier over the table and in the sparkling shades around the dark embossed-leather walls. Gay and splendid it certainly was, and Fow in bird's-egg blue coat, with gleaming tray, quite as resplendent — and most heathenish and horrid, thought Mrs. Tibbetts, being seated by her host on his right at the great round table, where many unnecessary forks and spoons and knives lay spread around her glossy square of napkin, flanked by many slender glasses. And then, looking up thankfully after being safely ensconced, she beheld Leaf ensconcing Georgia in the same solicitous fashion, and just as calmly, to outward view, as he pushed a wheelbarrow of carnations into the greenhouse. His lean cheeks, to be sure, were as vivid as his new tie, but he was laughing and not looking around him any more than if he had been dining in the old kitchen at Russet Four Corners, and he was dropping quite easily into the high-backed chair opposite the doctor. But Mrs. Tibbetts was not so easy. She was acutely aware not only of the black beads of Fow's watchful



---

---

eyes, but of Leaf's eyes and ways as he talked to Georgia and of Georgia's answering eyes and ways. So this was she, come at last, the first girl he had even so much as looked at. But what was the use of his looking? Any one could see that she was not for him, not likely for any man with that cool way of hers, just like a boy friendly with other boys, and her being a Woman's Rights and all that. But her gentleness and the kind look she gave him! That was the danger. At any rate, she should not hurt him, the poor motherless, fatherless boy — not if Eliza Tibbetts were alive to stop her! But just as this strange wave of resentment swept over Mrs. Tibbetts's vast content, the first woman Leaf had even so much as looked at lifted her dark eyes and smiled right across all the splendor at Mrs. Tibbetts, looking anything but dangerous in her plain black gown. Anyhow, she was n't much of a figure, she was that thin; but her face was sort of taking, and she had just lost her mother, poor thing! Mrs. Rush had said so.

Just here Dr. Craig's voice came across the snow-field of tablecloth saying quite naturally, —

“Perhaps you — will ask a — a blessing, Mrs. Tibbetts.”

And quite as naturally she was bending her head and saying the familiar prayer of her lifetime:—

“Our Heavenly Father, we are thankful for Thy loving-kindness, for food and raiment and for the



higher things. Make us worthy, and willing to share. Amen."

Georgia saw her napkin through sudden tears.

Then Craig said softly, with a little laugh, "Is it too barbaric, all this light, Miss Frame? Shall Fow subdue us a little?"

"Please, no, not for me! It's glorious. I adore the barbaric. It's so definite and — and courageous. Don't you adore it, Mr. Leaf?"

Leaf was cautiously squeezing lemon over ice-bound blue points. The cowlick was brushed into moist abeyance. "I don't know it — except in the circus. I've followed it for miles there."

"An' ran away with one once. I ain't forgotten that an' never will." Mrs. Tibbetts's swift remembrance diverted her from any embarrassment in spearing her first oyster, on her salad fork. "An' Mr. Tibbetts an' me ridin' everywhere huntin'. An' you comin' home in Dr. Penrose's buggy, white as this chiny, an' gettin' — "

"Twigged?" Craig threw in.

Leaf confessed to the twigging and grew reminiscent of a spangled blonde in a golden chariot drawn by ten black ponies, and of a mermaid in a shimmering green tub.

And the oysters went and the soup came and went, and Fow whisked plates off and plates on under Mrs. Tibbetts's first frightened, then fascinated, eyes, with a skill that reminded her of what the missionaries told of the cunning of the savage.

Poisoning would be a simple matter in such a bewilderment of food and behavior, especially when Fow leaned suddenly over her shoulder and poured sparkles into a tall, slender glass, from a bottle wrapped up in a napkin.

Craig, rising to the ceremonial of carving, felt, too, the bewilderment of behavior, the behavior of fate in making possible that company — his triangle — Leaf down there behind lights and scarlet berries, the boy of the milk wagon and the country station, the boy with the bitter curses on his lips! And Georgia, with an olive poised between her fine finger-tips, telling gayly of Peter's delight in the small balsam pine tree, and of Mrs. Pretty's lament that there was n't "a smitch of a card tellin' who had sent 'em." Impulsively, he put down his carving-knife and fork, and lifted the glass of sparkles.

"Leaf," he said abruptly, "I've just got to stop carving and tell you again how glad I am that you are here, you and Mrs. Tibbetts. Drink with me to — to the past and to — the future."

Leaf, too, had risen, flushing hot, shying on Craig that uncertain, melancholy little glance of his, lifting his glass of sparkles high, saying not very coherently,—

"There was — something ahead, after all — was n't there?"

"Much. And still is. To the past and the future, Leaf!"

"Rather — to — to the now," Leaf said, his glass to his lips.

Georgia looked from one to the other with quickened heart-beats. It was tremendously poignant to her, somehow, tremendously dramatic, knowing what she knew. And the two men such antitheses: Leaf, slender, vivid, keen, proud, unworldly, full of dreams; Craig, big, splendid, fearless, man of the world, man of the age, and — and her lover!

Mrs. Tibbetts's withered cheeks flushed. Vaguely, she was aware of the bigness of the moment, and of a growing beauty in the radiant face opposite her.

A wild thrill drove Georgia to her feet, her glass uplifted.

"And may I — too — drink your toast?" she said, with a little laugh. "And then one to — to our mothers?"

In the silence, the ice tinkled in Mrs. Tibbetts's glass. Then her voice came clearly, —

"So that's champagne. I've often heard tell of it. An' if ever I was to — to want to drink any liquor — which I never will — seems as though it would be that shimmery, sparkly stuff. But Mr. Tibbetts an' me, we signed the pledge when Billy come."

Leaf had paled, looking into his glass. "I'd trust you, ma'am — anywhere, about anything — without any pledge," he said, with a half laugh.

Then Craig looked up to declare that, for his part,

---

he preferred country cider to the finest vintage, and Georgia recalled walks to the cider mill during college days; and from cider they progressed to apples and orchards and small fruits, and then on to Leaf's gardens and what he had done and was going to do. Presently, he was leaning forward with great animation, and his color had come back and the cowlick was growing rampant, and his eyes were shining as he confessed his dream — the more and more acres he hoped for and the big house he was going to fill with homeless boys, to train them up into noble tillers of the soil. Why, was n't it absolutely reasonable, inevitable, that to a motherless, fatherless boy Mother Earth might mean everything?

By this time, Mrs. Tibbetts had grown fearless of Fow's beady eyes and much more reconciled to Georgia's prettiness; she was even courageous enough to exclaim over the red apples that proved to be ice-cream when you stuck your fork into them. And it was not long before Craig drew back her chair from the table, and led the way into the library, where the coffee service was grandly spread on an inlaid stand by the hearth, and the firelight made a pleasant change after the glitter of the dining-room.

"You will pour the coffee, please, Miss Frame?" he said, drawing the low gondola chair to the table.

"Love to, out of such a stunning Turkish pot and into such adorable cups! Everything here is so grand and beautiful!"

"It serves its purpose, if it pleases you," he said gallantly, lightly, finding the easiest chair for Mrs. Tibbetts.

And then Georgia poured there in the firelight, and the two men sipping the little cups thought their thoughts of her, this dweller of their dreams: Craig, seeing her ever there, where she ought to be, belonged, had to be, and should be, no matter what the cost; Leaf, seeing every detail of her, making her into his highest vision, to look up to, never to reach toward — some day, in blissful despair, to lay bare his soul to.

"Seems like that Chinee of yours acts like a Christian," Mrs. Tibbetts observed presently, draining her cup.

"Oh! Fow?" Craig laughed. "I don't know, I'm sure. He's a genius as a servant. I'm not so sure about his creed."

"An' you never have no fears of poisonin' or stabbin' in the dark? I've heard tell in missionary meetin's."

"Fow's as faithful as a dog, Mrs. Tibbetts. He'd set a fine example to a good many of us Christians. And now" — and he rose a little hesitatingly — "I wonder if you ladies mind our smoking?"

At this Georgia grew surprisingly mirthful and declared that no new woman minded so *pleasant* a masculine weakness, and Mrs. Tibbetts confessed to liking the smell of a good cigar.

"You goin' to try one, too, Billy?" she said, when Leaf, too, went to the smoking-table.

"Of course," he said briefly. Then, in a lower tone to Craig, who was holding out an odorous brown box, level full of Havanas, "Cigars did me a good turn this fall — that night in the road."

"Me, too," Craig beamed, striking a match.

Meanwhile, Georgia, talking of coffee-making to Mrs. Tibbetts, was reading many things in Leaf's brief answer, in the little stiffness with which he took his cigar and lighted it, the deliberate and conscious interval between his puffs. It was easy for her alert, critical mind to understand that Leaf was doing many things for the first time, and doing them proudly and well. Then a quick inference followed and pained her — of the struggle behind the prosperous "now" to which he had drunk his toast; of the cramped, bitter years in the past. No wonder his eyes were melancholy and his laugh low and not wholly joyful. So thinking of him she looked away from his eyes, which rested on her quite frankly on their way to looking into the fire.

Half an hour later, he was in the machine at the door of the Lynton, watching her make her good-byes to Mrs. Tibbetts, taking firmly the hand she gave him as she told him his flowers would keep her from missing her old friends at home.

And in the brief interval between the machine and the vestibule of the Lynton, Craig was finding time to say, quite casually as he had planned, a



rather tremendous something that had been on his lips all day. He was lifting his hat and holding open the door as he said it,—

“I have given you no — no Christmas present, because you — you will not let me give you everything.” He was not logical and, firmly as he held himself and often as he had rehearsed his speech, he had hesitated twice.

Not so Georgia. Half within the shelter of the Pompeian vestibule, she answered serenely, “But you have given me and all of us a present. Has n’t this very grand and beautiful party been very much of a present!”

And out in the machine, Mrs. Tibbetts was saying relentlessly, after some rapid deductions, “The doctor seems to care a heap for her, Billy.”

“A heap,” Leaf echoed, turning up his coat-collar.

A heap! It did n’t surprise him in the least. Somehow, had n’t he always known it ever since that day years before when the three fish were to go to “a girl’s cat next door”? But it knocked the breath out of him, after a fashion, now! Why should it? What had he, Billy Leaf, to do with it? Let love her who would, to him she was unchanged, his absolutely as his spirit claimed her. By something higher than love, she was his. Even if she never were aware of his spirit’s claiming of her, she was his. In no other way should a woman ever be his. Not for him, the price of human passion and

---

human injustice, any passion less pure, less white, than the passion by which his spirit vowed her things eternal! So she was his! And as for her, did she care "a heap"? Did she care at all? All evening after the return from Craig's dinner, he was asking himself this last question. Late that night, down among the boilers under the roses, as he and Riley shoveled in coal, Riley whistling "Hot Time" in the *tempo* of his shoveling, he found a way to get an answer. He would hear her at the next Suffrage meeting. The papers would announce her speaking. He could tell then. But why did he care, anyhow? He was hers!

"Heap o' stars!" Riley said, as they went over the yard to the house.

## CHAPTER XIV

### IN WHICH THE HEROINE DECLARES FIRST LOVE A FALLACY, AND ONE HERO IS GLAD

REPRESSION is an acid that etches deep. Theodosia's Boston visit intensified her intensity. Mrs. Caryl, the venerable aunt, had made it at once clear that the Suffrage was the one subject that was to be avoided, and had vigorously knitted socks for poor ministers' babies, during the whole of Theodosia's stay. They had talked much of relatives, especially of Theodosia's mother. Mrs. Caryl called her "Fanny," not saying that she had thought her a fool, but recalling amusing incidents of her undomestic arrangements for the discomfort of her husband, and again and again pronouncing her "brilliant," the most "brilliant" person she had ever met.

"My! but it does seem good to be back, with a free tongue in my head!" Theodosia exclaimed over the little supper-table the night of her return. "I've been in a towering rage ever since I left. Of course, aunt is father's own sister, and I have a sort of sneaking family affection for her. Besides, she gave me fifty dollars for Christmas. And that's where I'm going to get even for the way she snubbed the Cause. I'm going to buy a new banner for Headquarters and publish my paper in leaflet form —

'The Enslaved Woman: the Deathbed of Evolution.' You see, mother was ahead of her times and aunt was n't. Aunt was miles behind. She loathes Evolution. So I'll get even that way." And Theodosia took another of Georgia's hot baking-powder biscuit.

"But it must have been rather nice to be with your own people, even if you were bored to death," Georgia said. "And baby socks are n't so bad as washcloths. They are prettier and less aggressive."

"Oh, do you think so! Of course they are daintier and prettier, but not less aggressive, Georgia. They're so fearfully symbolical of — of just servitude. But babies are aunt's strong point. She's fat and sentimental, you know. And she was forever saying that babies know more than college graduates. And she has all her children's first shoes."

"Oh, I can see what she means, my dear! Of course, it is educational, the experience. No one denies that. And it's fine when you're old to have children to take care of you. But it's the — servitude in between. Did n't you say so, Theodosia?"

"Say so! One day I tried my best to make her understand our position, the sanity of it. I explained all about our dream of breeding a glorious detached class of women to do the world's work, and leaving maternity and all that sort of thing to the women who can't do anything else. And I told her all about your great hobby of having the brainy women never fall in love, and — "

"And what did she say?"

"Say! My dear, she was perfectly enraged. She snorted, and I had to telephone for the *masseuse*."

"Well, perhaps that was a — good deal at once. It was n't tactful, at least, considering she had married. And I do agree with her about the niceness of babies."

"Well, I don't! I have n't any use for babies, anyway. There's education enough without selling yourself into slavery for a baby or two, as Linda Rush has done. Besides, there are plenty to adopt, goodness knows!"

And Georgia got up and began to pile the dishes to carry them to the pantry. "It's nice," she added slowly, "to feel their little hands in yours. It was nice that day out at Linda's running down the mountain."

Theodosia dropped her butter knife. "Georgia Frame! Don't, for conscience' sake! You sound like aunt. What have you been doing since I've been away? You look tired." And to herself, she added, "And talk tired."

"I'm not a bit tired. You've been away only five days, my dear. I've been sewing and acknowledging Christmas presents and working on my talk for next week at Headquarters. 'The First-Love Fallacy,' you know."

"I remember. Been anywhere? Seen any one?" Theodosia was finishing her last biscuit lingeringly.

"Nowhere, except to — to Dr. Craig's for Christ-

---

mas dinner. Did n't I mention that in the postcard? You were in — "

"Really! Georgia, you are too glorious! Unchaperoned! How simply immense of you! That's as it should be!"

Georgia had colored up to her dusky hair. "Of course not! How perfectly absurd! Where would my position in the high school go if I did that sort of thing! He asked you and then — "

"But you're not consistent! A perfectly emancipated woman does just as she pleases. And you say you're emancipated. What a chance you missed! But do go on and tell me who was the chaperon? It's exciting even if you did give in."

Georgia laughed in the pantry, over the running of hot water into the white sink. "I'm afraid to tell you, my dear. You'll simply explode with excitement. And it does sound like a queer combination. But it was n't. It was a very nice party every way."

"Mrs. Rush and the infants, I'll wager, and a Christmas tree and — "

"Not at all! Little Joy is too ill for that. No, it was — Mr. Leaf and Mrs. Tibbetts, just the four of us. And the table — "

"Of all the perfectly extraordinary combinations! How did he happen to? But, of course, it was just because he was so determined to have you. That was the whole of it!" And Theodosia recklessly jabbed her napkin into its ring, and went into the pantry to wipe dishes.



Georgia was still rosy over the steaming Ivory soapsuds. "Not at all," she said composedly. "Dr. Craig came here and invited both of us, — you first, indeed, — and then, when he found you gone, what could he do, poor man, but get some one for me? And he remembered that Mr. Leaf and Mrs. Tibbetts were sort of alone and forlorn up there in the country."

Theodosia held up to the light the tumbler she was shining, inspecting it critically.

"Aunt said that, in spite of your theories, you are sure to marry," she said, with a little laugh. "She's crazy to meet you. I told her all about you and she said she used to know your father's family years ago in Holton. Her husband was a minister and had a charge there for a few months. And she said that she was thankful we lived together, because you are more like a real woman and you'd modify me. She says you're sure to marry."

"A real woman!" Georgia faced around and confronted Theodosia, her cheeks flaming, the dishmop in her hand. "My dear! A real woman! Of course I'm a real woman. And that's why I loathe subjection to man, and blushing and dimpling and dying of joy because a man makes love to you, and putting your whole chance of happiness in this world and the next into a man's light keeping. Let them make love to you and then throw them over hard — and get even — that's my philosophy. Marry! What I long to do, if I ever get money

enough, is to fly away from conventions and all such — rot! But just because I like — like to cook and make a room pretty! What does your aunt know about me, anyhow?" And turning her back on Theodosia, she splashed the mop back into the sink.

"Nothing at all, my dear, of course," Theodosia said, very mildly. "And I did bring home some interesting books. Perhaps they'll help you in your talk. There are some Ellen Key things and a great new book by Olive Schreiner. It makes me feel just like shouting, it's so ringing and conclusive."

"It's all ringing and conclusive," Georgia said, more quietly and more bitterly, — "just living it, without a word from Olive Schreiner or any one else. But do come into the living-room and see what I've done on my talk."

"And the flowers, all the lovely hyacinths and things?" Theodosia questioned a little timidly, burying her nose in a tulip. "These popular teachers!"

"They've been company for me," Georgia said, a little vaguely, turning out the dining-room light, for economical reasons. Then, quite distinctly and quickly, "Mr. Leaf sent them on Christmas Eve. And I was n't here and he left them on the porch and Mrs. Pretty found them and brought them around to the door, in out of the cold, and so troubled because there was n't 'a smitch of a card sayin' who they was from.' Now, you want to get into your kimono, don't you, and be comfortable. And then

do hear my paper and see what you think. Of course, that night, I'm going to talk it, if you think it's all right."

And presently they were well into it before the living-room fire, Theodosia in a cloud of cigarette smoke, Georgia penciling and underlining as she read, and was approved or disapproved.

The night that she gave it, down at the Headquarters, with Theodosia's new banner waving outside in a nearly zero temperature, over a thin sleety snowfall, and the windows frosted over into a fine imitation of the human mind that refused admission to right theories of living, Georgia felt very sure that she had something worth while to say. The Ellen Key things and the ringing and conclusive Olive Schreiner book had been of great assistance, after all; and Theodosia's quotations from her Aunt Caryl's discourses upon babies and real women, had sharpened her pen into a biting wit that sounded, when clearly and ironically read, extremely convincing. So it was with a great composure that Georgia sat upon the platform that night, waiting for the president, Mrs. Lillie Watkins Webb, to finish her little introductory talk upon New Year resolutions in Suffrage work: greater loyalty in actual living up to the principles of the Cause, less theory that made the Cause the butt of the ridicule of ignorant and prejudiced journalism, more fearless investigation of the evils that women only can understand and remedy. Mrs. Webb spoke well,

---

---

and Georgia followed with warm sympathy, and yet it was diverting to watch the people already there and the belated ones still coming. In the third row from the platform Mrs. Pretty was conspicuous in white kids, come to hear Miss Frame and find out just what she was making such a talk about. Annamae was less curious, and, besides, had had an engagement with a gentleman friend to go to the movies. There were all the women of the high-school faculty, and a sprinkling of high-school girls, interested to know what Miss Frame could tell them about first love. "She's old enough and stunning enough to know a good deal," Liddie Rich had whispered. "Old enough to have forgotten all about the first," Alice Ward, the class wit, had giggled back. And among the late comers there were some Boulevard women, in awfully good clothes; women that Dr. Craig had pointed out and told her of as being interested in the Cause; women at whose houses he was a welcome guest, according to the "Society Column." And then there were dozens of others who were just women to her; some of them tired, faded, past the period of any illusions about first love or any other stage of love; others vigorous, practical-looking, seemingly as serene as if to them first love were of small moment in the larger concerns of life. And yet, which of them was, or had been, immune, Georgia wondered, holding the little roll of her notes tight in her cold hand. But she was immune; she could tell them the way to

immunity and independence, the glorious way of living in the things of the mind, spreading wide the wings of the spirit. There came the reporters, those two odious men whose quizzical gaze was so disconcerting. And there was Theodosia's friendly antagonist, the ruddy Mr. Wedgwood, of the Boys' Club, with a yellow rose in his buttonhole. There! He had found Theodosia and was leaning over quite devotedly. One on Theodosia! And Theodosia was squirming a little and getting away and coming toward the platform. And then there came the Reverend Mr. Finney, of the Methodist Church, and Mrs. Finney; and presently, yet more of the cloth, the Reverend Mr. Utter, of the Unitarian Church, unaccompanied because, perhaps, he had not as yet experienced the fallacy of first love, and the Reverend and well-beloved Dr. Grace of the Second Church, and Mrs. Grace. Georgia clenched the little roll of notes tighter and wished Mrs. Webb would finish. It was much easier to get up and do it than to sit there and wait to do it. And if Howard Craig could just hear her do it.

Then Mrs. Webb did finish and the secretary, Miss Royce, who was a librarian at other times, read the minutes, and Georgia shifted her notes to the other hand and wished her throat were n't so dry. But there was still a hideous moment to wait. And Theodosia was coming up on the platform, with a very bright pink in her cheeks and that swinging stride of hers, and stopping by the



secretary's table, one hand quite composedly on the back of the president's chair.

"Mrs. Webb has given me permission to make a little announcement — and a little plea," she said in her firm contralto. "And Mr. Wedgwood, of the Boys' Club, has been kind enough to make possible both announcement and plea. Mr. Wedgwood is lending us the Boys' Club for a great experiment — on Washington's Birthday night, a dance for working-girls and boys or young men. Mr. Wedgwood and his boys are going to decorate the rooms and furnish the coffee, and — and" — Theodosia colored under her fairness and needed a word — "and it's up to us to furnish the sandwiches and gather in the girls. And my plea is a fervent one, that you'll all help."

The applause, at any rate, was promising, especially Mr. Wedgwood's. No one beholding or hearing could have for a moment doubted the response of Mr. Wedgwood to Theodosia's little plea. And in the midst of it, Theodosia strode down from the stage, and committees were appointed with promising speed. And then in the lull, Georgia found herself rising and going to the front. And the Reverend Mr. Utter was thinking that she herself disproved the fallacy, and Liddie Rich was whispering, "She is n't a bit teachery, is she? My, but it's thrilling!" And Mrs. Pretty was thinking, "Not a smitch of dress-up about her, an' that stylish, she's a picture."



Meanwhile, Georgia's hands were getting a little warmer and she was well launched, curling her fine lips a little scornfully and picturing "first lovers" in the gentle spring, in street and park and woodland way, all styles and kinds of first lovers, and all thinking themselves discoverers, originators, inventors of this devastating foolishness that blinds them to realities, dulls their reasoning faculties. And literature had helped on the piteous hallucination. It is only the modern realists that tell the truth. Tolstoy tells it and Balzac, and Bourget and the others. But the poets go on lying rhythmically and fancifully about it, and the artists spill melting colors on canvas about it, and the musicians write melting and moving and false melodies about it, from Schumann and Schubert down to the latest music-hall composer. And the poor young hearts that are the victims! Somehow, she felt here that her figures of speech were not beyond criticism, but her cheeks were burning, thoughts were storming her tongue for expression, and — and — and, yes, the door was opening, and — was it Dr. Craig? Was it? No. Mr. Leaf was coming in. The red necktie! The cowlick rampant! One quick glance he gave her; then sank into a chair by the door.

Quite unnecessarily, she turned a page of her notes — at random; then stepped a little farther forward upon the platform; then heard herself exclaiming irrelevantly, passionately, "And oh! we

women must be free! We must be happy!" Perhaps she only thought she had exclaimed so irrelevantly, for in a moment she had herself quite in hand, and was making a logical point, proving that the very term "first love" was the fallacy. If "first," it must be transient, transitory, fleeting into a second. Then where all the vows, the dreams of eternity, the unswerving faith? And what was left? False ideals. And what resulted? Fatal choice of the wrong road to happiness, away from the permanent things that made for serenity, for success, and that lead to a life of emotion, a life that involved the heart in endless opportunity for suffering. And the disaster of the fallacy? The undermining of the independence of woman, the overthrow of her serenity, the weakening and wasting of her usefulness. If it only were true, all that it promised — this "first love"! If it were! But it is n't! It is n't! And we — we women — we must beware, and help our sisters, big and little, old and young, to spread wide the wings of the mind, of the spirit, and fly, fly — not creep! And if the air is rare so high above things of the earth, things of the mire, it is clear and sunny and there is no horizon — so the air-folk say!

She stopped. Over a deep, sharp little hush there was a roar of applause. She sat down and looked into her black lap through a rush of tears; then up. Leaf was standing, leaning against the wall. The high-school girls were cheering shrilly. Theodosia was quite pale, her hands clenched.

Then Mrs. Webb came forward and stood between her and the people.

"You have spoken very wonderfully, dear Miss Frame," she said, taking her hands. "It must make people think, truth so beautifully and passionately told. But between us, I am very glad your mother did not feel as you do. We need you too much."

Georgia drew hands away with a faint smile. "You are very kind," she said. "And I believe I am tired. The party at the Boys' Club will be very nice, will it not!"

But she was thinking how flat it all was, without Craig to hear it, and learn his lesson from it. Craig was the one that would best have understood. And then she caught sight of Leaf still at the door, looking towards her. What had her words meant to him? Had she hurt him? There was that white look in his face.

And somehow, presently, she was getting into her coat that Theodosia brought her, and hearing Theodosia saying, tensely, as only Theodosia could, "My dear! It was the biggest thing of its kind I've ever heard. You just thrilled us with your logic. Now I understand exactly what your philosophy is!"

And the next minute, out in the street under the fine new banner, in the white of the electric globe on the snow, Leaf was taking her hand and saying, with a half-smile, "No exceptions, first woman?"

"None," she laughed, turning off with Theodosia toward home.

## CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH THE HEROINE HAS NO PART, BUT A  
HERO AGAIN ASKS QUESTIONS

CORILLA and Adelaide had n't gone to school that day. The snowfall of the night before was too deep for their short, sturdy legs. So Linda had set them to washing the forks and spoons while she started Carl and Jack, filling their hungry lunch-boxes and gathering in the schoolbooks from all sorts of surprising places in the rambling house. Then there was a final hugging and kissing, a calling of the ever-ready Skip, and off the boys floundered through the fallen and falling snow..

Linda stood at the living-room window watching them to the turn in the road. They were nice boys, she was thinking. Carl had got in all the wood and coal for the day. Jack had fed his chickens and helped Jo Cuddy with the milking. They had to work hard, poor little chaps! A deep line between Linda's fine, dark eyebrows betrayed the little pang that smote her at the thought. There! They were turning the corner, waving back, throwing her snowballs and handfuls of kisses. Now they were gone! If their father only had had to work! If he had n't been the only child of comfortable, easy-going parents! His boys, at any rate, should n't be spoiled. But little Joy! Spoiled! Blighted! And with the

ever-fresh pain of the thought, she turned to him, in his carriage before the fire. To keep him near her she had brought him downstairs in his little flannel gown, rolled in his fleecy blankets, and tucked him up in the carriage. The little red engine lay close to his small, thin hand. Most beloved of all toys was the little red engine. He lay quite still, but he was not asleep. The heavy eyes under the white, blue-veined lids were following the throngs of sparks from the well-seasoned chestnut logs, as they flashed into the black of the chimney and away. The soft, pale brown hair curled loosely on the pillow.

Linda sat down close to the carriage and reached for the "Daily Dispatch" of the previous evening. Jo Cuddy had brought yesterday evening's mail only that morning when he came to milk. The storm had been too wild the night before. Carl and Jack had had to get on without him; but then Carl was almost equal to doing all the chores around the place. Carl was a dandy worker, Jo Cuddy said, and so was Jack, when he did n't forget. Linda unfolded the paper softly so as not to rouse Joy. Then she yawned a little, and ran her eye down the front page. It was n't a very suitable time, perhaps, to sit down and read the paper, with those two children cleaning up in the kitchen and all the day's work staring her grimly in the face; darning and mending of the week's wash, and bread to make, bread for those sweet, ever-hungry little mouths. How many, many loaves she kneaded every week



with those hands of hers that were n't a bit pretty any longer! Only the dimples were left of the pretty white hands she had had as a girl, and the dimples were thin. The other day her wedding ring had come off in the dough. She had scrubbed it up and polished it before she put it back. Inside, the initials and the date were as bright as the day Carl had put it on her finger, there in the little hotel parlor when the strange minister had married them. No, it was n't right to sit down to the paper so early in the morning, with everything undone. But then, she had got up early to get the boys off, and besides — besides, what was this Georgia Frame was doing? At least, she would take long enough to read about Georgia. What a dear she had been to send all those Christmas books and toys to the children, and that book to her, "The Mother as an Individual," by Olga Heelinj, one of Macmillan's new books. Just as if there were still a chance for her to be an individual! Not a ray of a chance! And yet Georgia and that fearfully clever friend of hers seemed to expect something of her along that line. Here it was on the second page! Georgia had been making a "thrilling, daring speech at the Suffrage Headquarters." It had stirred things considerably, judging from the big headlines and the careful reporting. "The Fallacy of First Love!" That was what she had been talking about. Linda plunged into the thickly massed, dry-looking paragraphs. Usually, when she read at all, she did not venture into



thick masses of print, and in love-stories she always skipped descriptions and got to the real parts. She was n't going to let the children do that. Even now, Corilla had to read the whole of "Red Riding Hood" in one syllable, and not just the exciting parts. So she read on, all down Georgia's carefully constructed, brilliantly ornamented speech. At first, it was n't wholly clear, the point she was making; Linda wondered if Georgia herself knew just exactly what she wanted to say in what she was saying so beautifully. The writing sounded fine. Then suddenly, toward the end, just where she said something about a "life that involved the heart in endless opportunity for suffering," there Linda began to "catch on," as Carl would have said. What if it did involve the heart? What was the heart for, anyway? And would n't a woman, any sort of woman, rather suffer a million times over than — than miss love? And if there were to be no more love, then where would be the weddings and the homes and — and the babies? Georgia could n't have gone that far. There must be misprints or misrepresentations. It was preposterous. Now if she had said to keep on loving just as always, but to be reasonable and cool and — and judicious about it! That was where she and Carl had made their mistake, and where she was going to watch out mighty carefully for Corilla and Adelaide. But to have Corilla and Adelaide old maids, with no chance of husbands or children!

No babies to pat their breasts with rose-leaf hands, no babies to bathe and croon to! Georgia and her friend needed a good talking to, and lots of time with the children. They must be invited out right away.

So Linda reasoned and decided; then her eye fell upon a small paragraph on the editorial page. "Fair Suffragettes and the Family" it was headed. And it merely said, in the form of a communication, "Will the new women, who are so rabid against love and marriage, tell us old fogies how they propose keeping up the supply of Suffragists to carry on the good work of the extermination of the family?" signed, "Subscriber." That was what Georgia had got herself into with her foolish speech. And Georgia of all people in the world! There was Dr. Craig head over ears in love with her now, and Mr. Leaf! Mr. Leaf was n't the same man since that night he had driven her over to the Center. And Mr. Leaf must n't be hurt. Poor boy! Never had had a mother to help him!

But here neglected Duty asserted itself. Adelaide appeared sedately in the door announcing that the spoons and forks were washed, and that Corilla was squeezing out the mop and would n't let her, and could n't they go out in the snow? And then Joy stirred and held out arms to be taken.

"Cea-al, muvver! Cea-al, muvver!" he pleaded, and was taken up and held close in Linda's lap, near the fire, and Sister Adelaide was bidden tell

Sister Corilla to bring Joy's Cream of Wheat and the cream jug, and then Sister Adelaide was to come back and push a chair near mother, so that Joy's breakfast could be put upon it.

And the little sisters were rewarded for their sisterliness with a prompt permission to go out in the snow with their sleds, provided they would help each other on with their high boots and leggings and coats and red knitted caps; and then Joy and the little red engine were played with very quietly and without the least bit of excitement, just as Dr. Craig advised. The worn, smooth seat of the chair that held the cereal plate made a capital slant on which to run a little red engine up and down very quietly, and Joy laughed, and seemed much better when he was bathed and put back into his little carriage for his nap.

And then eleven o'clock struck on the high old clock in the living-room, and there was that kitchen to clean and the bread to knead. What sort of bread would it be after such a time for rising! And the kitchen fire was low. So Linda poked in chips and logs out of Carl's well-filled woodbox, and kneaded her bread while the kettle was heating the water for that great pile of dishes, and then rolled back her sleeves over her round white arms. Outside, Corilla's and Adelaide's red caps glowed cheerily through the falling snow, and their laughter as they slid and floundered, rang pleasantly in the hush. Aside from the children, the white fields and the

vague white lines of the mountains were dismal enough. Linda sighed over the sink, and had a swift flash of longing for a bridge party or a good play.

Drama at once responded to the wish. Leaf appeared around the corner of the house. He bore a pot of flowers done up in a newspaper, but he stopped for a volley of snowballs from Adelaide and Corilla, started them in the construction of a snow-man, and then came resolutely onward and knocked at the kitchen door. At one and the same time, when Linda had answered, he stamped the snow off his feet and uncovered the pot. It was an azalea, bright with pink tips of bud. Then he produced a bulky brown-paper bag from his overcoat pocket, a brown-paper bag tinged with succulent grease-spots.

"Hot yet!" he said. "Doughnuts Mrs. Tibbetts sent the children. She was frying them — and — and I was coming."

"It's the very best thing you could have done — to come," Linda laughed, wiping her hands and dropping into a chair. "It's fearfully dismal. I was just wishing, for a minute, that I could see a good play. I used to be crazy about the stage. Find a chair and be comfortable. Dear of Mrs. Tibbetts to think of the children and of you to bring the azalea!"

He had flung off his overcoat, but he still stood, just inside the closed door. He seemed not quite decided whether to go or stay.

"I've seen three plays, that's all," he said. "I saw 'Lohengrin' once. Wonderful, isn't it! And then 'Peter Pan' last year, and 'The Merry Widow.' "

"A queer combination! I want the children some time to see 'Peter Pan.' They'll like it, I know, but to me it seemed — silly. 'The Merry Widow' was fine, though. Such catchy music!"

He had walked to the window and stood looking at the red caps in the snow. Suddenly, he turned and sat on the edge of the kitchen table, frowning a bit. Then he tossed back the cowlick and looked up.

"I may as well begin," he said. "I came to ask you something."

"Ask *me* something! About children? Your adopted family of boys?"

"No, no! Not at all. You see, I have never — never lived — in a sense. I know nothing about standards and — and values and — society, as you call it. Now about cows and horses and crops and — "

"Society is n't much — when trouble comes."

"Perhaps it is n't, but you've got to know a few things. How far, say — " But he said no more until he had walked again to the window and looked out at the snow. Linda began to understand. Then he came back and leaned against the table, his hands in his pockets, frowning still at the well-worn kitchen floor. "How far, say, can a man be — be just a — a woman's friend, when there's no show —



absolutely none — and he knows it? You see, up in the hills where I grew, the only thing was — was sweethearting.”

Linda smiled into his gravity very gently. “It’s all sweethearting, on one side or the other, or both. You can call it what you please. It all comes to that in the end.”

“Then” — he looked up quickly and shied on her those serious eyes of his — “then that keeps out a good many — stops a good deal!”

“A good many heartaches and regrets.”

He left the table and began a desultory walk about the roomy old kitchen. “But suppose — suppose you can count on yourself to — to stand things, and there’s no show for you — not a shadow of it — and you make that quite as clear — clear as day, — would it be — wild to ask for it?” A deep flush was rising, in spite of his courage, up from the collar of his soft brown outing-shirt.

“Poor boy!” Linda was thinking again. If it were her boy, her Carl or her Jack, begging so! Of course, she understood. And Georgia talking about the “Fallacy of First Love”!

“Oh, don’t!” she said, almost petulantly. “Wait and fall in love and — and be married, and be — be happy, Mr. Leaf. You will be awfully happy with a nice girl that loves gardens and wild things and — ”

“I don’t think happiness has anything to do with it, or being married. I shall never be married. That



was settled for me — long ago. This is quite — another proposition. Just to let a woman know quietly, honestly, that now you're glad you're alive — because she's alive — when you have n't ever been before! You bare your head to — to a queen, the books say. Why not your heart to — to the vision?"

"There's not a woman in a million that's a vision, the way you mean," Linda said vigorously.

"But, at any rate, she could n't be — be angry or — or think you overbold," he went on anxiously. "Could she? And there are more than a million women in the world." And he smiled faintly at his logic.

"But I don't see the use. What would be gained if — if a man gave himself away so?"

"Not a bit of use. 'Use' is n't the thing you're thinking about. I said, of course there is absolutely no use, and he knows there is n't. Just the joy of telling and of knowing that, come what may, she knows. Somehow, is n't it one of the — the eternal verities, as the poets say, to have such a thing clear between you? I've read some poetry — some Browning, and that's the very idea."

Linda got up abruptly and opened the stove door to put in more wood.

"I don't know, I'm sure," she said, with a little laugh. "I'm too practical for that. I just believe in old-fashioned falling in love and getting married, not in getting hurt for nothing."

"Let me," he said, getting a log, and pushing it into the mass of red embers. "Now your kettle will boil and I'll go along and not keep you any longer. How's the little chap this morning? Why not let me fill your kettle? Save your lifting."

"Joy seemed pretty bright," she said. "There! You are a jewel. That's a great help. Don't go!"

"Oh, I've got to! We're moving Easter lilies into a warmer house and I ought to be there." He was getting into his overcoat. "Thank you for — for listening!"

"Thank me! What have I done?"

"Let me make a — a fool of myself." He was at the door, his hand on the old-fashioned latch.

"Oh, no! Only don't get hurt, if you can help it. Ugh! It's getting colder. Are you wrapped up warmly enough? Why don't you wear a muffler? I have an extra one of Carl's here. Won't you?"

Out in the thick snowfall he laughed back, "I never muffle up," he said. "This coat is a concession to Mrs. Tibbetts."

Then, with the door half shut, she got up courage to ask her question: "What under the sun is Georgia Frame talking that way for?"

He stopped rolling a snowball for Adelaide to throw at Corilla. "I heard her," he said. "She was beautiful. Does she mean it, really?"

"Of course she does. Love to Mrs. Tibbetts. This wind is too cold for me. Come again soon. Good-bye."

Through the window she watched him finish the snowball and help Adelaide to a deadly aim; then saw it land upon Corilla's red cap, and Corilla in hot pursuit, till he vanished round the corner of the house. Presently, as she filled her pan from the brimming kettle, she caught a glimpse of him crossing the field through the falling snow. Boy that he was, laying bare his heart to her and thinking that she did not understand! And what was the matter, back of it all? Why had n't he as good a chance for happiness as any other man? Not perhaps with Georgia Frame! Who would ever have a chance with Georgia Frame, if she should get over her wild theories, unless he were terribly clever and handsome and polished and traveled and rich? Even Dr. Craig did n't seem good enough. And now, of course, it was Georgia Frame that was the "Vision" as he called it. A vision was a poor substitute for the good wife he needed.

Tending Easter lilies, Leaf pondered the vision. It had been a joy, though a difficult one, to approach it in talk with Mrs. Rush. Never before had he spoken of it, other than in the voiceless converse with the plants as he worked over them in the greenhouses, and with the thin, untuneful old piano, on which lately he had taken to picking out harmonies. He had thought of it pretty constantly, especially when he sat upstairs at his desk facing the picture of the blindfolded girl with her harp, clinging to the globe in the vast blue of space. When he thought of

---

it there, looking away from the fat ledger in which he wrote nightly the day's earnings, or up from a "Yearbook" of the Department of Agriculture, or an article in the "Scientific American" or the "Journal of Horticulture," he himself intruded into his reflections. Before he knew it, he would be launched upon that wild, shoreless sea of wonder and uncertainty as to his own whence and whither. The nightly trend of his thought grew quite regular, as the time wore on: the vision, the more real than vision, the great Never that was himself, the wherefore of that Never, the unanswerable whence.

One night, when the burning-out of his lamp had roused him from hours of roundabout thinking, he sprang up with the energy of morning. What a smell from that lamp! All the oil burned out. And filled to the top when he had lighted it. It must be pretty late. He blew it out, lighted a candle, and threw open a window. A night of stars came in, clear and still and cold. Cocks crowed off Denbigh way. He opened the door into the hall and looked downstairs. From under the kitchen door came a thin beam of light. Mrs. Tibbetts was still up. Good! It was easier to ask her now, in the night. Besides, how could he wait till morning!

Downstairs the lamp was not yet odorous, but it was burning low. In the big old Windsor rocker with the white crocheted tidy, Mrs. Tibbetts sat fast asleep, the "Ladies' Home Journal" half fallen from her lap. Jock was curled up under the stove,

but he rapped the floor with his stub of a tail as Leaf came in.

"Good boy! Good boy!" Leaf said.

Mrs. Tibbetts started up and settled her glasses. "Law! Was n't asleep, was I! How come it, I wonder! You been havin' a nap, too, Billy?"

"A nap or something like it," he said, astride a chair, facing her, staring at the flame of her lamp.

"Want a bit of pie or a doughnut? Sleep better for not bein' hungry."

"You said once," he began abruptly, — "you said once that — that Dr. Penrose brought me to you. I've been trying to think something out."

"Yes, that's right. It was ol' Dr. John Penrose. But what's the use of worryin' about that? You're just as good as anybody."

Still staring at the light, narrowing his eyes a little as if he were following a wavering thread of possibility that needed steady watching, he went on: "Where did all Dr. Penrose's papers and books go when he died? Who got all the old things? Don't you see, ma'am? There's my chance."

She took off her glasses and wiped them on her broad white apron. "There's not one chance in a thousand there for you, Billy. An' what's the use worryin'? Every drop in you's good blood. I know that."

"But who got the Penrose things? I can just remember the huge old cherry desk and medicine-case in the doctor's office — big as one end of the

room — all little drawers and doors. Who got that, do you suppose?"

"Let me see. I ain't thought about it for such a long spell. There was n't any Penrose or Penrose relations in the Mills to have it. The nearest was a niece, a long way off, dressmaking, I heard tell. She never come. An' — an', why, of course — There was a mortgage an' everything went. Ol' Dr. Penrose never sent in half his bills. Law, it's all comin' back to me now! Why, the place went right to the Irish, to that same John Sullivan who was running a dairy there when we left. Decent people."

"There's my chance, then, if they have n't sold and burned and destroyed," he said, still following that fine thread of possibility.

Mrs. Tibbetts got up and went to the pantry. "Here's a whole half of apple custard pie," she announced, emerging well laden, "and rusk. A bite'll do you good, Billy. Look at that clock. Midnight."

He rubbed his eyes and got up, stretching his arms above his head. "That night," he said, — "that night when I first wondered and — and asked Mr. Tibbetts, and began to want school — that night there was apple custard pie. Queer I seem to remember!"

Mrs. Tibbetts set the pie and the doughnuts on the table. Then she pushed back her glasses and looked at him directly out of her very blue old eyes, and put her hand on the arm that was n't busy cutting pie.



"Billy Leaf," she said, "don't go to rummagin'. If the Lord wants you to know, you'll know. Don't meddle. An' ain't you your own self? That's all there's any need of, anyhow!"

"That's all!" he said. "Good-night, ma'am! That's the best pie in the world! Come on, Jock!"

Upstairs the room was fresh. When he went to close the window, he stood for a moment looking out at Orion.

"There must be some good blood in me, somewhere, or I could n't have recognized her so instantly — as my vision," he confided to the old warrior. "I'm thankful I've never blundered and been — been mistaken."

## CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH MISS PENROSE TALKS FASHIONS AND USES  
DISCERNING EYES, AND THE HEROINE IS UNCOM-  
PROMISING

"THE only real sacrifice in becoming a religious, for me, was giving up chickens," Sebastian was saying, with a whimsical curve on her thin lips. "Don't laugh now, Miss Penrose. I mean it."

"Laugh!" Miss Penrose said weakly, smoothing down her soft, gray-streaked hair with a frail white hand. "Of course I'm not going to laugh. I know how to take you — you cool, white nuns you!"

Sebastian had brought in the peptonoids instead of sending it by little Sister Monica. It was in a delicate Haviland cup with a rim of pink roses. Sister Monica brought it always in a thick white cup to keep it warm till Miss Penrose made up her tired mind to take it. Out of the Haviland cup, when Sebastian brought it, it did not demand so much resolution. But this was Sunday afternoon, four o'clock, and Sister Monica was having her weekly hour of recreation. On sunny days, Sister Monica and the other Sisters off duty, recreated in the brick-paved back yard of the hospital, and fed the pigeons, or petted the hospital cats, that purred, with arched backs and waving tails, against the nuns' black skirts.

"The poor things must have at least a small bit of a soul, they're so loving," Sister Mary John affirmed, stroking Abraham fondly. The hospital cats were always dedicated to sacred history.

"No more than — than nothing," Sister Monica declared prosaically. "That's a temptation, Sister. They're just — cats."

"Of course they are, the poor things!" Sister Mary John admitted tenderly, still stroking Abraham.

But this Sunday afternoon, the brick-paved yard was a wild splash of rain, and indoors white-faced sick folk looked at the world through rain-blurred windows. Cats were in warm corners near the big boilers in the cellar, pigeons under high overhanging eaves of the chapel, and the Sisters off duty, recreating themselves with prayer in the chapel below the pigeons, or with "Lives of the Saints" in the chapter room.

"You cool, white nuns!" Miss Penrose repeated, as Sebastian sat down on the side of her narrow, snowy bed and gave the peptonoids a premonitory stir. On the right of the small bed the door was half ajar into the big ward with its many narrow white beds.

"And our habits black as coal and our hands none too clean ever in this smoky city! It's you, Miss Penrose, that's the cool, white lady! That is the prettiest nightdress of the lot, after all." And the spoonful of peptonoids was held to the pale, tremulous lips.

Before its warmth had touched them, a flood of color wavered up from the thin neck in its frill of soft lace, over the haggard face into the waves of grayish-brown hair.

"You don't know, Sister. How could you?" she whispered, lying back wearily after swallowing. "You could n't — could n't guess my — my color."

"Blue," Sebastian laughed softly. "Those blue ribbons are lovely with your hair. But, as I was saying, I do love chickens. And there's much about them to make a good meditation. Did you ever think about that, Miss Penrose?" The peptonoids spoon was traveling quietly and steadily back and forth now, and the waves of color had flowed back heartwards. "White Leghorns in spring sunshine are so radiantly pure-looking and somehow so — shining with God's goodness. And the black cockerels! They're so handsome and so scornful, like princes of darkness, defying God. And the little chicks running, frightened, from the shadow of the hawk like — "

A soft knock at the door on the left that opened on the passage. Sebastian put the empty cup down on the bedside table. Perhaps it was the doctor earlier on his rounds.

But it was n't the doctor. It was Georgia Frame in a very wet rubber raincoat and a wet rubber hat over the wet rings of her hair, with a wet bunch of daffodils in her hand. If Sebastian had been at all sentimental she would have exclaimed at once,

"April personified!" But before she had time to exclaim anything, Georgia was whispering, "Oh, Sister! I can't come in! I'm too wet. Besides, I did n't intend to. I just came to bring these. They were sent me, and it was so dismal, and I thought of Miss Penrose and —"

She got no further because Sebastian was kissing her on her wet cheek and drawing her into the little room, and Miss Penrose was smiling faintly and saying, in a different way, what Sebastian had not exclaimed at this sudden invasion of spring — "Oh, how lovely!"

"Are n't they!" Sebastian echoed, unbuttoning the raincoat and finding a chair at the side of the small bed. "And Miss Penrose, this is my friend — and Dr. Craig's — Miss Frame. We are so glad to see you, Miss Frame. Miss Penrose was just getting tired of me."

A quick little wave of color again washed up from the soft lace frill, and the faint smile grew definite. "Why, Sister! Tired of you! As if I could be! You rest and lift a —"

"First, I'll get a jar for your flowers," Sebastian broke in gayly, "and give one or two to the old man that sent you his orange. He's too ill to eat, you know, Miss Frame, but he can see, thank God! And you be telling Miss Penrose about all the pretty things in the shop windows." And she went out, thinking, "Poor child! There's the pang of coming, but there's the blessing, too. She needs the real things."

And Georgia was thinking, as she took off her wet gloves, and her dripping rubber hat that sent little trickles down her neck, and as she grew less afraid to realize the haggard face on the pillow with its eager gray-blue eyes that traveled so quickly over her plain black gown — she was thinking, “I’m glad — glad — I’ve done it — taken the plunge — faced things just as they were with mother. And now it’s over — and I need never dread it again.”

And aloud she was saying, —

“Oh, such lovely things in the windows, Miss Penrose. You know Jenkins and Bartlett’s? The most exquisite new cotton crêpes in delicate blues and pinks and greens, so clinging and graceful. And wonderful linens in white and colors. I adore linen dresses, anyhow.”

Miss Penrose had turned weakly on her side and put her cheek in the palm of her pale hand. She was smiling quite definitely now. “When I get up,” she said faintly, — “it won’t be long now, the doctor says, — I’d like to make you a gown of — of that new crêpe — pale yellow — with a touch — just a touch — of turquoise. Lovely! Just your style. And in the house you would n’t mind — colors.”

“No. Indeed, I’d love it. What an artist you are, Miss Penrose. Surely you shall!”

“My trade are all waiting till I come back,” she went on, “and there’ll be lots of spring work. But I’ll squeeze in some time for you. I had all I could



do and more — much more — till — till this grew inside. But Dr. Craig is so wonderful! He's pulling me through. And then" — she half closed her eyes and swept Georgia again with a weak attempt at the professional — "then there's a shade of red — they have n't worn it this long time — not since the — the last winter I sewed in — in Holton — terra-cotta, you know —"

"Talking fashions!" Sebastian cried softly, coming in with her jar of daffodils. "But you see, birds and flowers and nuns are always in fashion — or always out."

"The habit of a daffodil, I suppose," Georgia laughed. "They do grow in sisterhoods usually. I never thought of that before. And the brown cassock of the thrush. You're a poet, Sister."

"In nursing we catch all sorts of things that are n't diseases," Sebastian said. "Once I nursed a poet and — And now there's the doctor! One hour ahead of time!"

And it was Craig, pushing open the door from the ward after a quick, light knock, then stopping, red and amazed at the challenge of Georgia's own color and surprise. Miss Penrose dragged herself up a little among her pillows. Sebastian, helping with soft, deft touches, nodded and exclaimed, "Is n't this a party, though, Miss Penrose! Gay in spite of all the dismal outside!"

And by that time, the two amazed ones had performed the ceremony of shaking hands somewhat

stiffly, and the daffodils were getting explained as the cause of so surprising a coincidence, or rather, partly explained; for Craig was guessing that they were Leaf's daffodils and Georgia was n't telling that they were. And then Georgia was looking for her gloves that had rolled under the small white bed, and Craig was picking them up, and leaning over to take Miss Penrose's inert hand in his own that still tingled from Georgia's unresponsive touch. And next Georgia was getting into her raincoat, and Miss Penrose was saying to Dr. Craig, who still held her hand in his tingling one, —

“Would n't she be lovely in — in pale yellow — with a dash — just a dash of turquoise?”

“Lovely!” Craig said, taking out the gold watch that the Holton Y.M.C.A. had presented to his father after he had won their big suit and refused to take a cent in payment. “You have very discerning eyes, Miss Penrose.”

Georgia, buttoning her raincoat, had crimsoned quickly.

“Have I?” Miss Penrose was going on in a weakly talkative voice. “For colors I have — for combinations. Always did have. But not for people.” And she swept Craig, bending over with open watch, one of her restless glances. “Except you,” she went on again, with a sharp little breath, “you are double — to me — like some one long ago.”

“You're tired now,” Craig said gently. “Too much party, perhaps, Sister?” And he clicked shut

the fine gold watch and laid the pale hand down on the sheet. "Downstairs, Miss Frame, will you wait just a minute?"

"You can find your way?" Sebastian said at the door, kissing her cheek lightly. "And you will come again, soon? Some time, to see me? Some time when you're troubled? You've been your mother's own child to-day!"

It was those last words of Sebastian's that led her to wait for him as he had asked her so quietly and so confidently to do. Her mother's own child! Of course she could not run away from him after that, as she had instantly decided she would do. It was the gentleness, the quiet and confidence of him that had given her the impulse to escape — in time. But now, if she was her mother's child, the mother who had trusted him, she would wait for him.

So she sat in the big hall with its coming and going of Sisters and doctors and folk of anxious face. Across from her bench the door was ajar into the chapel, and the quiet came out and a faint fragrance of incense and roses, and now and then a nun, prayer refreshed. How far, far they were from her, — they praying, and tending those fallen and crushed in the wild rush of life — she struggling, and urging on the rush and the struggle, hurting herself against — against what? God's way with the world! That is what Sebastian would answer — Sebastian, who had seen so many beginnings and ends. And now this end — Miss Penrose. Some-

how, there you felt it, the struggle and the defeat. But that was where the Cause came in, where women reached out for it, so that there should never be defeat.

"You waited!" he broke into her deep thinking. He was unfeignedly glad, like a boy, he who ten minutes before had read mysteries in faint pulse-beats. "I'm so glad."

A wave of tenderness for old times swept over her; then frightened her into a quick reserve.

"Of course," she laughed. "I thought there was a message or something."

"No message at all—except the unanswered one," he said in a lower tone, holding back the door for her.

The fresh wet of the night braced her. The rain had slackened. Street lights shone blurred, wet pavements gleamed, trolley bells were sharp.

"It's been gruesome for you. Let's be gay. Come for a little supper at the Blue Boar. I'll cut—if you will."

"What will Theodosia think?"

"I can't imagine!" Her consent looked possible enough for him to laugh.

"Well — "

He unfurled her umbrella triumphantly. "Wise girl!" Then to Cox, behind the big lights of the runabout at the curb. "Home, Cox. I'll follow along in an hour or so."

"I did n't dream of doing such a thing," she said half crossly.

"Neither did I, till Miss Penrose said 'blue' on the 'yellow gown' — then I thought of the Blue Boar." What pure joy it was to be so nonsensical! "How quickly associative my mind is!"

"Absurd! And what is the Blue Boar, please?"

"A joyous little inn — you'll see. Miss Elliot and I dined there two weeks ago to-day. And I thought then I'd get you to come, some time. It's been ages since I've had a chance at you."

"Not ages. Only since your nice party at Christmas."

"That's ages. It depends upon what you count with, head or heart, how time is measured."

"It's simply flown. I've been busy every minute."

"So have I, every minute. But never too busy to feel the drag of the wheels."

"I've seen how busy you've been, dining out — with Miss Elliot and others — and quarantining against measles and making speeches on sanitation."

"So have I been reading about you — about your making speeches — on sanitation — quarantining against first love."

And he laughed quietly and glanced at her face as they crossed under the glare of the arc-lights. She did look as if she had been working hard, and not yet had he succeeded in bringing that blithe little line into the corners of her mouth.

"It was a flat failure," she said bitterly. "I know that."

"I heard just the contrary. Miss Elliot was there. She said it was splendid, but that you — you were too good-looking to live up to your theories."

"What nonsense! If I were what difference would that make? Mr. Leaf was there."

"I know he was. You can't help my knowing all about what you do. He told me last week that he had been there. I saw him on the way to Mrs. Rush's."

The Blue Boar was receiving them into its warm, low-ceiled taproom. The only light came from the big logs blazing in the deep chimney, and the softly shaded electric candles on the tables. Some one, by happy chance or a most skillful arrangement, was picking harmonies on a zither not too far away, harmonies that took melodious shape in Schubert's "Serenade," as Craig seated her at a table in range of the firelight and dropped into the chair opposite. If — if for a minute, at least, that stupid waiter would n't bear down upon them. If for a moment, at any rate, he might be privileged to watch her downcast face as she unbuttoned her gloves, and to meet her eyes as she looked up, and then see what she would do when she read at a glance what, for the life of him, he could n't help his own eyes saying to her — even if she was a Suffragist.

He drew a long breath. The blithe line began to curve the corners of her mouth. The waiter approached with cracked ice and the menu, a pallid waiter with a high-domed forehead and the mouth



of a cynic. He had seen a lover before. Masculine lovers usually had just as good appetites. The women usually played with olives and crumbled breadsticks all over the clean linen, and drank black coffee. But he gave absolutely no evidence of having arrived at any such psychological conclusions. The water gurgled over the ice in the tumblers, and Georgia said:—

“And what was it Mr. Leaf said? You were going to tell me, were n’t you?” She met his eyes quite as if she had never learned to read eyes.

He looked down at the menu. “He said that he had seen wild geese going over that very day. But first I must appease your hunger. Shall I order what I know would be suitable food for a new woman?” And when he had been permitted, and the cynical waiter had gone away, he went on, “And that the sap was running in the sugar maples, and that the bluebirds were back. A sort of spring bulletin, you see!”

“And did he happen to comment upon my address? Did he say that I had made a fizzle of it all?”

“He said it was glorious and — and uncompromising.”

“It was uncompromising. I meant it so. And you did n’t come to hear it!” She looked him serenely in the eyes. The blithe little line curved the corners of her mouth. The zither player was softly tinging his way into the “Evening Star” from Tannhäuser.”

Craig leaned across the table, playing with his oyster fork. His eyes were very steady and his jaw very square.

"With me," he said slowly, "are n't you always — uncompromising enough — off the platform?"

"With myself, yes! Never with you. One has to be, in a big work. Besides, you know I was born into being uncompromising." To herself she was admitting that it was a big work, a very big work, always to be uncompromising with one's self, especially when there were all those foolish, womanish, unreasoned impulses in one's heart to fight against. That was what her mother had known, what she had fortified her child against. Of course she was uncompromising.

"How long are you going to be uncompromising?"

"Always."

"Always? With every man that — "

"Oh, not at all! Always with myself — until —"

The waiter was back, serving Lobster à la Newburg in and out of their talk, then departing to stir salad dressing at a side table with a pallid companion. The "Evening Star" was fading into a mist of tremulous harmonies.

"Always?" he repeated slowly.

"Always until — until you men are as — as fair and — and true as you expect us to be." The blithe line had quite left the corners of her mouth and she had flushed deep above the delicate muslin collar. "Is that fair?"

"That's fair." He had grown pale as she had flushed. He took a deep drink of his black coffee.

"And you have no news for me from the country?" she said quickly and lightly. "What did Linda have to say?"

"Much, of course. You're to come out very soon, indeed. She has a great deal to say to you."

"And little Joy?"

"He's holding on. But I shall fail there."

"Fail! But why?"

"Why? Because — because of heredity."

"I'll go out very soon. But I shall never believe that you will fail."

"That shall be my success — that you think me invincible."

"Does Linda know? There! he's playing that adorable 'Four-Leaf Clover'!"

"She's too brave to let herself know."

"And yet in college she did n't seem to have even as much as a characteristic, except liking good times and being in love — as you'd call it."

He laughed. "Yes, I'd call it just that — in love — drowning deep."

"Where in the world did she get her courage and her sort of — of dignity, as if she had achieved — when she has n't."

"You'll scoff and call my answer cheap sentiment: from love and children."

"Love! Love that's ruined her life?"

"Love that's — that's given her the children."

She's the bravest woman I know — after Sebastian."

"There! Like all men, you're utterly illogical. Where does Sebastian get her courage and strength?"

"Since I don't know, I'll answer just as she would, and you can believe or not. 'From God' she would say."

"That, of course, is more probable. Her spirit makes a white, steady flame, mother used to say."

He leaned across to her, pushing away salad plate and coffee cup, unheeding the ethereal soufflé that was coming. "Where — where do you get your courage?"

"I have n't a — a 'smitch,' to quote your friend Mrs. Pretty. I just go through things. Courage is to sing while you're going."

"I don't agree with you or your definition. It's the going through, not the singing. You have great courage. I know — if any one does."

She could n't bear that he should recall those days in which she could not have gone through things without his belief in her courage. "Mr. Leaf has courage," she said abruptly.

"Leaf is a hero. Nothing daunts him."

"And his plan — his beautiful plan for helping motherless and fatherless State boys. If I were a millionaire!" She shrugged expressively and pressed with fine finger-tips the geranium leaf in the finger-bowl.

And Craig, scenting the faint sweetness she had

extracted, said foolishly and sentimentally, "You have courage, *belle dame*, but you are *sans merci*."

"I aspire to one virtue only — the greatest of these — common sense," she laughed, as they rose.

But that night, long after office hours, out of the hot memories of his talk with her, he recalled her sudden flush and hesitation, and her "Always — always — until you men are as fair — and true — as you expect us to be." And then, through some strange subconscious crossing of wires, he awoke hours later out of a bad dream in which he had heard Miss Penrose saying, "You are double — to me — like some one long ago." The only thing for that kind of uncomfortableness was a cold plunge and a smoke.

## CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH A HERO SMELLS THE UNPLUMBED, SALT,  
ESTRANGING SEA, BUT HEARS ECHOES ACROSS  
THE STRAITS

NOT very long afterwards, Leaf knew, from experience so vivid and fresh that it seemed unreal, that he had not blundered this first, great time, and had not been mistaken. Out of all focus with life as he was, why was n't it the rightest thing in the world for him to make his own perspective, to take things absolutely as he saw them, not as other people had been seeing them for ever-narrowing ages of convention? And he saw that it would be the fullest life for him to worship a woman and let her know that he worshiped her. That was her right. Was n't it in his blood, bitter, strong, rank as quassia, that a woman had other rights than those that had been his unknown mother's portion and had brought him into the world? That was his only inheritance, woman's rights and men's wrongdoing. And now the chance of his life had come to him, thank God! to show to a woman who could understand that, with the fine, pure worship of his spirit, he recognized the rights of her spirit, and made offering of himself. If he achieved nothing else in his whole life, it would be something to have achieved this: to have said to the one woman who wore the crown of her sex,



"Your lovely, pure, sacred Highness and Holiness, in memory of my mother who had all rights denied her, in honor of all motherhood that has been and is to be, I pay you the entire homage of my spirit!"

In no such high-flown fashion, however, did he reason all this out to himself during the days after the day on which Linda Rush had told him to wait and fall in love and be married. The conclusion came to him very simply and quietly one morning as he walked through the drifts of sugar snow over to the early trolley and rode through a white world into town to see some seedsmen and do some collecting. In addition to business, if he got through in time, he was going to buy a book, treating himself to a little browse in Preston's bookstore back among the shelves lined up with challenging titles and fragrant of fresh paper. The book he was going to buy was called "The Oxford Book of English Verse." He had seen it on the table at Dr. Craig's Christmas Day, had picked it up and turned it open to something lovely about "a spirit, yet a woman, too." He was going to get it in that nice soft leather binding, so that he could stuff it into the pocket of his coat and take a dip into it out in the fields, in the houses among the plants, or anywhere he had a mind to.

The seedsmen and the storekeepers were slow as molasses at that season of the year, and for the same reason. The heavy snow and the cold had made the city laggard in going about its business. And the

---

shelves in the back part of Preston's bookstore were more than usually alluring. He was tempted almost beyond his strength by a peep into a set of Shelley in half-calf. He would read him soon and own him; and here was the "Oxford Book." It looked nice, those crisply printed verses, especially that one the book fell open to about mortal millions living alone, in the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea of life, like far distant islands, but with echoing straits between. "The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea!" That was a thrilling line! Just exactly his own life — unplumbed — salt — estranging! Once, on an excursion to Boston, he had gone down to Marblehead and spent the day all alone by the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea!" And "the echoing straits!" He knew all about echoing straits. The poem was just his own idea of things. What a joy to find that books said what you'd had in your mind to say all your life and could n't! Hardly a night that he had n't had — jumbled up, of course — just those thoughts, going to and fro between the house and the barn or the greenhouses. And years ago, up in the hills, before he had any schooling, he had felt them deep down in his heart or somewhere where he could n't, for the life of him, get at them. And now here they were in a book and in poetry. And — and, no doubt, that would be just the way it would be if he told the "first woman" frankly and quietly how he felt about her! He would find in her mind, in her heart, perhaps, all said out quite

plainly and beautifully, all those things he had been thinking out about women, the souls of them, or spirits, or whatever there was that made them the high, pure, lovely things they were if they had a chance to be.

And then, coming out of Preston's with the "Oxford Book of English Verse," in its soft leather coat, in the pocket of his coat, he looked up at the town clock, saw a long hand at twelve and a short hand at two, whistled softly and amazedly at the flight of time, realized that he was mightily hungry, and turned into Pidgeon's Quick Lunch for Ladies and Gentlemen. Within, the first lady he really beheld, sitting at a little table in a corner, just biting into a cheese sandwich, and reading Olive Schreiner's "Woman and Labor," propped against the Worcestershire Sauce, was Georgia Frame.

It was one of Georgia's assertions of emancipation and democracy to go to Pidgeon's Quick Lunch on days when the teachers were kept in. To Theodosia, there was nothing the least assertive about such an adventure. She was not dependent for appetite upon a flower in the middle of the table, and she had no prejudice against paper napkins; neither did she mind the propinquity of persons who ate baked beans with their knives. There was no merit whatever in Theodosia's taking a meal at Pidgeon's. But to Georgia it savored of the heroic as well as of pot-roast and doughnuts. The only palliation she permitted herself was an open book

---

for a vis-à-vis. And just at the moment when Leaf came swinging in, with his green ticket in his hand and the cowlick rampant after he had done homage to the young lady in the cage at the front, she was reading these lines: "And it is down this inclined plane that the women of civilized races are peculiarly tempted, unconsciously, to slip from the noble height of a condition of the most strenuous social activity, into a condition of complete, helpless, and inactive parasitism, without becoming clearly aware of the fact themselves, and without society's becoming so."

Leaf stopped short, crimson, his heart in his throat. Georgia's white hand turned the page deliberately and meditatively, then lifted the thick teacup to her delicate lips. Her lashes looked very soft and black against the flush of her cheeks. Pidgeon's was always warm. Then, before Leaf had summoned courage to turn and retire without profaning the quiet little ceremonial of her eating just as every other woman did after certain intervals of time, she put down the ponderous cup, wiped her delicate lips upon a paper napkin, and lifted her eyes directly to him.

"Why — why, Mr. Leaf! How perfectly delightful!" she cried softly, in the quiet emptiness of the late hour. The blithe lines that Craig thought so alluring curved the corners of her mouth; she removed Olive Schreiner from the Worcestershire. "You're the very last person one could hope to see

in all this snow." And her hand went out over the mustard and the thick sugar-bowl and the pepper and salt.

"You're the very person I wanted to see," he said, smoothing down the cowlick with the hand that was not tingling from her hand. He was cooling a little, dropping his green ticket and picking it up, and wondering what next.

She came to the rescue. "Get your lunch and sit down here," she said, sweeping her little black gloves and her black tippet and her lean little purse off the table into the chair at her side. "I'll eat this sandwich very slowly while you get something."

So he got something on the black tin tray — a charlotte russe in a paper case and an éclair and a cup of coffee the twin of hers of tea.

"Is that enough!" she exclaimed prosaically, as he put his tray down gingerly opposite hers. "Are n't you starved after coming in that long cold way?"

"Oh, no!" he said radiantly. "How in the world did you happen to be in here?"

She colored faintly. "I suppose it is n't quite the place for women," she began, "but —"

"It's just the place for you — to-day," he broke in, putting his third spoonful of sugar into the coffee.

"So — so it seemed to me, when I had to stay after school and put in the marks. It's so near school, you see, only two blocks, and then I have to go back again for interviews."



He was emptying the paper case. "Oh, don't go back — to-day — for anything," he protested. "I have something to show you." He was not quite sure of just what he was saying. He felt as he had felt in the woods listening to the hermit thrush. If she should fly away — now — before he had learned the song — now, the very first time he had ever had her really to talk to — and so much to say! How little — how ridiculously little — Mrs. Rush knew about the matter!

"To show me?" she repeated. "Where? Something in your pocket?"

He laughed. "Yes, something in my pocket. I've a book there — to talk to you about. But I want to show you the — the world outside — in the snow."

She drew a deep breath. "Oh, I should love to. How? In the trolley?"

How she was helping him in his sudden, mad scheme! Of course! Why not in the trolley, out toward Bloomfield through the hills and along the river in the gorge. That was finer than out the Center Way, and more — more chance to — to tell her what he had to tell.

"Would you really go? The trees are like silver hung with diamonds and the fields all shining and quiet and white. I'd like to — to see you — in it." It was poetic, what he was saying so haltingly, with a flush on his lean cheeks and a fine smile in his shy eyes, but he was eating the éclair in the most



businesslike fashion, and he finished with a deep draught from the ponderous mug. Then, seeing her eyes not less smiling, he changed his mood and tense. "Will you really go?"

"Of course I will. I'll telephone to school and say I can't come back. It may not be — ever again this winter, and I have n't seen the hills in the snow for so long. And it is n't far?"

"An hour out and an hour back," he said truthfully, thinking of its shortness when one had so much to say. "And a trolley in five minutes right out here on the corner." In his joy as the plan grew nearer and dearer, and she began to draw on her gloves, a little panic beset him. What about her green ticket. Should he take it and pay it, her little ticket punched 15? Might he? Should he dare? He would dare all things to-day! He swept it up with his own, punched 20, and went to the gilded cage without a glance at her, shutting herself into the telephone box. And in five minutes they caught the car marked "Bloomfield," got the very front seats behind the fur-coated motorman, and were whirled off through drifted streets into a dazzling country.

"I should call this an adventure," she said. "It certainly was the very last thing I dreamed of doing."

"It is the only thing I have dreamed of doing — not just this way, perhaps. But dreams always do give real things a marvelous twist." He was doing

a dreamlike thing at that very moment, putting a dime into the conductor's big glove instead of his usual lonely nickel, and getting back no change.

"And how is Mrs. Tibbetts? And how are they at Mrs. Rush's?" she went on in a very undreamlike fashion, thinking how immensely interesting he was sitting there at her side in his frank delight and finding her so immensely interesting. The country in the snow was like an enchanted land under all conditions, and now to see it with this elemental personage, this faun! She began to feel herself slipping into the new rôle in which he knew her, being the part she filled in his refreshing and somewhat mysterious drama of life.

"Oh, they are very well," he was answering, leaning his elbow on the back of the seat, so that he could see her as well as the outside. "Mrs. Tibbetts is reading 'The Rosary,' crying over it behind my back and pretending she has a cold."

"Are you reading it, too?"

"I can't — can't get into stories much. Enough things happen. What's the use of making up anything more? I like history because it has happened and — and poetry and — don't laugh — fairy tales because they never do happen. But then, you see," — his sensitive face shadowed and colored faintly, — "I'm not really educated. And you asked about the Rushes. I saw them day before yesterday."

"You did! In all that storm! And they were well? What did Linda have to say?"

He laughed. "Oh, yes, they were well — that is, little Joy was comfortable." He shied a quick glance at her. "And shall I tell you just what Mrs. Rush did have to say?"

"Do! Just what she had to say!"

"She said, 'What under the sun is Georgia Frame talking that way for?' She had been reading your speech."

"And what did you say?"

"I said" — he looked out of the window at the roofs they were leaving in the valley behind them as they began to climb — "I said, 'Does she mean it?' And she answered, 'Of course she does!' "

"I thought you knew that — that I mean it," she said in a lower tone.

"I'm sure that you mean it — first woman! I'm going to prove to you that I believe that you mean it — every word."

The valley was rapidly widening out below them in the poignant, half-melancholy radiance of the afternoon sunshine. Other snowy hills blurred the opposite horizon; then below them came the fine penciling of forest slopes; then vast white sweeps of meadow; then in the valley spires, towers, roofs, tall chimneys plumed with dark smoke or radiant steam; then the snowy hill-pastures that bounded the track they were traveling. Round a wide bend they swept into the silence of trackless woods. Behind them in the car an old German woman talked intermittently to the conductor about raising ducks and marketing

them in the city, two Poles chattered violently out of big knitted comforters, and half a dozen grammar-school children rollicked on the rear seats. To Leaf, seizing the moment with his pure passion, they were all as remote as the rabbits under the snow outside.

"I am so sure that you mean it that — that I — I am afraid of nothing," he went on quickly; then facing her, the color dropping out of his cheeks a bit, "I am so sure that you mean it, that I believe — devoutly — that you will understand everything."

She did not at all understand, now, at any rate, what it was that she had to understand. The conventional thing that women expect, it never occurred to her to expect.

"Is n't a man who has nothing — who — is nothing — nothing back of him or ahead of him — is n't he exempt from — from — just convention?" How could he say it to her as swiftly and beautifully and powerfully as it ought to be said! Then he said it.

"It's I, Miss Frame. I don't know who I am — no one does. I'm just a — a Leaf. That cuts out — absolutely" — How fine and black the sharp pines climbed that snowy hillside! — "forever — the things men ask for — from women. But my Vision — what my spirit is because of her — that I may have — and keep in honor. That is you, first woman!"

He had been right. It was like finding his own

unexpressed self written out plain in the lines of a master poet to see the response there in her eyes. Of course, she understood. She was not blushing. The blood had quite left the delicate round of her cheek as she turned away and looked out at the hills, then turned slowly again to him.

"And you — you are the fagot-boy?" she said, almost in a whisper, with a deep smile.

"Yes, I am the fagot-boy. You understood?"

"Of course, I understood. It was a wonderful story. And — and the prince who — who roused you?"

He colored quickly; then faced her eyes level.

"Craig," he said. "Dr. Craig. He undid my ignorance — changed my destiny. You knew?"

"I thought — perhaps." Her eyes had not flinched, if that was any sign! Did she care "a heap"? What difference did it make to him, anyhow! She was his "Vision." That was his right, not Craig's or any one's else.

She was looking away again, out at the gleaming birches that followed the track. And he was going on, —

"That night — on your back porch — that very instant when you opened the door — that instant you made me know — at last — what I had been let live for. That's what you did, first woman! And you see — I knew you would see — that since I'm cut out of — of other things men have — it's not too daring — too intrusive — this — this telling

you." His voice was very low, between quick breaths, his eyes not on her at all, but on two crows high and close in the blue. "There's nothing else to it — just having told, you know!"

"But how can I ever be — be splendid enough to be — what you think me?" The woman of her spoke in the large tears that slowly filled her eyes. How piteous it was to be cut out of the other things men have! Then she remembered that he had asked for nothing. "You have given me, too, a — a vision! What a measure of your belief in women!"

"Belief in you, first. I've thought of it this way; you see — you're the kind my mother ought to have had a — a chance to be."

"She must have been worlds — worlds finer, or you could n't have —"

"Have recognized you." He finished with a little smile. "That's another way I've thought it out: that there's some good, somewhere behind me, or I could n't have understood — when you — opened my door."

The trolley slowed up. The old German woman was laboriously alighting.

"No schvimmin' to-tay for my tucks," she called back, as the bell tanged twice, and they swept off along the margin of a frozen pond, then under the lee of great windy icehouses, then whirled round a long curve of snowy swamp scrawled over with low willows and alders.

"Does it make much difference, after all," she



began slowly, "what is just behind us? God's back of all — you and me. He's a great ancestor."

"I've thought it out that way, too, after a fashion. Not your way, of course. How could I, when it seemed, for so long, that God — had n't been square with me, making me alive without my having any say about whether I wanted to be! Now it's different."

"You poor boy!" she began.

"Don't, please! Visions don't." He shut his hands quickly. The color flew into his cheeks. "Now I understand, of course. God's square enough. It's men that are n't."

"Ah, that's it. That's the trouble with the world — that men are n't — except sometimes. You and — and —"

"My God! how could I help being!" he broke in tensely. Then in a minute, with a long breath, "And now we understand — absolutely."

"We understand absolutely," she repeated.

He leaned over and rolled the window shade a little higher. "This is Bloomfield we're coming to — quite a place. Makes thousands of baskets and porch chairs out of the willows and alders in the swamps. We need n't get out. We're late now by that clock over there, and they'll switch the trolley round and fly back." "Fly back!" he said again to himself, thinking that half of the time was already gone.

They stopped on the big town green, under the bare elms.

"Shall we get a breath before we turn?" he said.

And for a moment they stepped out and breathed deep; then got in again and whirled back into the white silence in a crowd of country folk with marketing and much weather talk back and forth, and of school children to be dropped along the outskirts of the little town. Leaf gave his seat to a woman with a small baby in a dingy shawl, and stood swaying by a strap, smiling quite serenely and unconsciously when he met Georgia's eyes looking away from the flying fields. There was no hint of an understanding, of a new relation, in his glance or his manner. And to her, still quivering from the revelation, it all seemed of the texture of dreams, not only in its strangeness and unreality and beauty, but in its prophecy of what was to be,— what was to be the high and serene relation of men and women under the new order of things for which she was working. Between her eyes and snowy fields, snow-laden trees, snow-buried walls, frozen ponds and brooks, there flashed the shining pinion of the Vision he had given her. But in her heart there was a new, dull ache for him and the things that were not ever to be his.

Halfway back, the woman and the baby got out at a crossroads where a sign nailed to a tree announced "Bloomfield Almshouse," and a deeply rutted road led off into the meadow. Leaf assisted at the alighting, bearing the bundle of baby while the mother climbed down and across the drifted

space between track and road, and then dropping back into his seat at Georgia's side.

"Desolate, isn't it?" he said. "But the deer don't mind. See their tracks out over that field. Thirsty chaps and no water." And then again he leaned forward, looking across her and out of the window, showing her, in flying glimpses, the world he knew best; the gray plumes of goldenrod tufted with snow; the faint, faint yellow coming in the willows; more crows homing across the west; snow-filled birds' nests; blue curls of smoke from farmhouse fires, prophetic of fine weather. Oh, the joy of having her eyes on the homely things, the new glory of them!

"You've seen Europe?" he said.

"Oh, yes. I know it well. Some day you will, and love it!"

"I've made a great — voyage to-day. This will last me."

This he said as they were skimming down Lime Street hill and curving round to the point they had started from, Pidgeon's Quick Lunch. The long hand on the City Hall clock was at six and the short hand halfway between four and five. The west they had left behind in the country was yellowing for a clear sunset; lights were beginning to flash in the stores. And just as Leaf stepped from the car and Georgia followed, there happened what naturally might happen at a busy time of day, a doctor's throbbing, straining runabout pulled up short and did

not run over the alighting passengers. But Howard Craig leaned out, surprised, flushing, bowing, plainly amazed; then chugged on again, his wheels throwing out the high-piled snow.

Georgia's mood dropped twenty degrees in a quick readjustment to realities.

"Mr. Leaf," she said quickly, "now I must go. It's been too wonderful. I've got to think things out all by myself. You've — widened my vision. Don't you see?" Little curly wisps of her hair blew out from under her black veiled hat, and her eyes reminded him of Riley's "Heap o' stars!" Christmas night coming in from the rose-houses.

"Of course, I see. But you are not going to be troubled or burdened, are you? I've just told you — that's absolutely all there is to it — first woman! That's enough to live for — that you let me tell you."

A paper boy jostled him, calling, "De-e-e-spatch! Evening De-e-e-spatch!"

She smiled faintly. "Troubled? I think I am — glorified!" Then, in a moment, "Come soon to see us, and bring the book you did n't let me see."

"Not because you're — you're sorry — for me, first woman?"

"Sorry? When I'm so glad of your — your greatness?"

His hat came off quickly, but not a word saved the silence as she turned and went past Pidgeon's pie-filled windows, crossed the street, and disap-

peared up Larch Street behind that tall new Farmers' Bank Building. In her throbbing abstraction as she went along, she was not seeing the group of high-school boys that swept off their hats to her and then pronounced themselves "stung"; nor her friend in the fruit store, the old Italian woman who peeped out from behind a pendent bunch of bananas to give her "Buon' giorno!" How could she see things of the street when she was facing her new vision of the sorry scheme of things — Leaf, nameless, friendless, piteous result of men's selfishness and women's wrongs, fighting, weaponless, for his chance, cut out of the things other men ask for — scorning passionately the things men take — because they are n't square. Oh, the black, cruel wrong of things! Had she needed this new pain, exquisite as it was, to keep her loyal to herself and to her work? And now here was the highest test of her loyalty. She must hold herself his Vision. That was all he asked her to be. Indeed, he had not presumed even so far as to ask her to be. He had only confessed that she was. But he would not let her be sorry for him. In that lay the test of her loyalty to him.



## CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH THE MELTING-POT BOILS, AND A KISS  
BURNS, AND THE HEROINE FEARS THAT HER  
WINGS ARE SINGED

BUM FLANNIGAN and Marcel Renault and Ernesto Cittrone were the Committee on Decoration for the party at the Boys' Club. Mr. Wedgwood was square and no knocker. He believed in giving every nationality a chance, at the same time that he encouraged teamwork. The Committee had expressed themselves unrestrainedly. Washington himself had no kick coming, but looked out serenely from the "Harp that once through Tara's." Lafayette looped up long festoons of red, white, and blue bunting, and Columbus and Garibaldi watched the modern style of dancing under wreaths of red, white, and blue tissue-paper roses.

"Corpo di Bacco, it's swell!" Ernesto exclaimed, mopping his shaggy brows.

"It's patteryotick, anyhow," Bum Flannigan declared complacently, carrying out the stepladder after a final touch on the "Harp that once through Tara's." "Now if that there Gus Blumenbach don't go queering us on the music. It ain't any deal of mine, but don't give me no trombone for dancin'."

"Nor me. My farver he say not. Ze trombone



she sing, she not mark time. Ze drom she is better," Marcel pronounced emphatically.

But trombone they danced to as well as drum and violin. Gus Blumenbach himself performed upon it, following the lively dance measure with frantic swellings of his rosy cheeks and bulgings of his china-blue eyes, interspersed with equally frantic moppings of his shirt-collar. As much in earnest was the drummer, in private life proprietor of a shoe-shine parlor in an old trolley car. His vigorous whacks left no doubt as to the *tempo* of the dance, and put to shame the bored languor of the violinist, who shut his eyes as he played. All this, of course, after Mrs. Lillie Watkins Webb and her secretary, Miss Royce, and Miss Theodosia Pell and Mr. John Paul Wedgwood had stood for some thirty minutes in formal line-up, receiving — receiving simpering or scornful or bashful or high-and-mighty girls in towering pompadours and almost a uniform of dark skirts and peekaboo linggerees waists. Most of them toyed with large monogrammed locket on long chains and introduced their gentlemen friends haughtily, in a flowery aroma of Hudnut's White Rose or Pinaud's Violet. Not so uniformed and not so haughtily came Annamae Pretty, in simple white, without a smitch of too much on it, and Kathleen Mooney, in the very corn-colored silk that had adorned the wax lady in Jenkins and Bartlett's show window and had n't sold, and that Mr. Sibley, the floor-walker in her aisle, had schemed to have

come her way for little or nothing. Not at all haughty, but most airily at ease were Annamae and Kathleen, very glad to see Miss Pell and terribly sorry that Miss Frame did n't feel up t' comin', and full of little glances and laughs for Mr. Wedgwood, very grand in his evening clothes, and cool, rather, to their solemn attendant swains in bulky neckties and shining patent leathers.

"I just had n't an idear it would be so swell," Annamae said. "Mommer is comin' in later just to sort of chaperoon a little bit. Won't she be just carried away, Kathleen!"

"Well, I should say," Kathleen cried. "Just like a scene in a reel stage play. Say, Mr. Wedgwood, but your boys are that tasty!"

At the other end of the receiving-line stood Theodosia, clingingly clad in her delicate gray green, and assisting in the distribution of the dance programmes, masterpieces of "patterytick" printing from the Club Printing Office, Henrik Winkiewicz, Head Printer. But presently, when the trombone gave a ringing snort and the "Grand March" began, Theodosia was led majestically forth by Marcel Renault, who could pick the good dancers, and Mr. Wedgwood bent low before the blushing Annamae, and drum and violin followed suit of the blaring trombone, and round the festive Gym, under the benign eyes of the much-trimmed "patter-yuts," wound the company in lordly style. Every drum whack increased the joyousness of

the occasion, and when finally the strains of the "Grand March" from "Faust" melted alluringly into "Mississippi Rag," the melting-pot of social problems began to bubble merrily.

"It's a 'go'!" Mr. Wedgwood called softly to Theodosia, as she ragged gayly by with the faultless Marcel. And yet for him it was n't much of a go if Miss Pell were going to devote herself too assiduously to breaking down cruel social barriers and working out Suffrage problems. At least three dances, with his arm guiding that slender gray-green form of hers through the mazes of the rag or waltz, would make the evening very much more of a go as far as he was concerned.

And less and less altruistic became the mood of the Superintendent of the Boys' Club as he danced on where duty called, while Theodosia serenely and obliviously kept him waiting, ragging around the Gym on her light feet with the radiant club members, intoxicating them with her praise of their decorations and their ripping music.

"You would do for lady of the White House," he said, when he secured her at last and bore her off, to the strains of another rag.

"Would I? I'd like the chance."

"That's an ambition for me. I'll try for the Presidency."

Her hated freckles quite disappeared in her flush.

"I meant alone, without assistance."

"Without a President?"

---

---

"No, with a President, a woman President. That's what it will come to some day, if we work hard enough."

"And that's why you've been dancing with everybody but me, working toward your sublime end?"

"Everything I do is for that end."

"And I am but a means, then?"

"We are all just means — even Annamae and Kathleen."

"Not much, Annamae and Kathleen. They're just plain human!"

"Pitiable, is n't it! How cruel men are!"

"Why? To give them gold locketts on long chains?"

"No, to treat them like fools in the beginning, to take them so for granted. That's where I hate you men so!"

"Hate us men?" The trombone was blaring.

"Hate men," she repeated less violently, giving him a smile in spite of herself.

"That's better. I don't take you for granted in the least."

"But I hope you do, me! That I am what I am, a protest against ignorance and injustice." And yet she felt like anything but a protest, unless it were a protest against the end of the rag. There surely never was anything more exhilarating, more conducive to hope for even the most discouraging cause, than this joyous dancing even with her op-

ponent, who, after all, was not only lending himself heartily to her interests but dancing divinely. What would Georgia say if she knew how much fun she was getting out of it! And he was not half so annoying in his evening clothes.

"Anyhow," he said, under the fury of the drum and the blast of the trombone, in the grand smash of the finale, "I don't believe the least little bit that first love is a fallacy. Do you?" And he bowed himself away and went to see why the Committee were n't ventilating the room. In another minute, he was growing even ruddier over a window that would n't come down from the top.

Theodosia sat down by Mrs. Webb and Miss Royce. It seemed only right to take refuge in the citadel after that broadside, and make him understand that such ammunition was wasted on her. Suppose he did n't believe in the fallacy of first love! He would find plenty of women as foolish as himself, women who made no pretense at being anything but just — just women! And there he was looking at Kathleen's programme and being deeply regretful, and Kathleen looking at him languishingly as he went away to find some one not so popular.

"Such an encouraging sight!" Mrs. Webb was saying, settling the yellow rose that drooped in her ample bosom. "And all your idea, Miss Pell! The only way to get hold of the girls!"

"And now do see Mr. Wedgwood!" Miss Royce



exclaimed. "Leading out that fright of a girl just as if she were a princess!"

"That may make her try to be one," Mrs. Webb reasoned hopefully. "And it's just like Paul Wedgwood. His father was our minister for years in Medway. They are the kindest people, but fearfully literary and impractical. A big family, of course. Paul worked his way through college."

"He's absurdly anti-Suffrage," Theodosia said, "almost mediæval in his theories about women."

"Would n't you be if you'd never had any regular mealtimes, just buffeted in the pantry? And if your female relatives always wore ill-fitting garments and never remembered to fill the lamps? Of course, you and I know there is no more reason why a woman should fill the lamps than a man, but then a man does n't reason. He just accumulates prejudices."

"Pity Miss Frame did n't come!" Miss Royce interjected. "She's tremendously convincing, is n't she? That was a brilliant speech two weeks ago!"

"Miss Frame is consecrated," Mrs. Webb said confidently and gravely. "She has a career before her, I am very sure. But this place is too small for her. She should be in New York or — or London, where women are really doing things!"

"She wants to be," Theodosia confided. "That's her dream, to go into some really big thing, some definite, constructive thing, not just to protest against conditions."



"But it is a big thing to protest," Miss Royce declared in a minor key. "Conditions need a very great deal of protesting!"

And at that particular minute Georgia was following a strangely similar line of thought about herself and coming to an almost identical conclusion, seated at her desk over a pile of uncorrected themes, with Peter curled in his basket on the hearth for companionship. She had got on very briskly with her work until Mrs. Pretty knocked at her door and asked whether Miss Frame did n't feel like goin' down to help chaperoon the party. Mrs. Pretty, if one judged by the close-fitting elegance of her purple panne velvet with its touch of *cérise* and rare old lace, and the glossy undulations of her hair under her plumed hat, and the smitch of powder on the rose of her delicately faded cheek, felt very much like goin'.

"Seems like I had ought t' go," she said resignedly. "'Tain't often I have a chance to sorter chaperoon Annamae. An' land knows a young girl needs a natural pertector these days. Greatest pity in the world Mr. Pretty was took so young, leavin' me with an infant — that's Annamae — an' him a veterinary an' out nights an' every sort o' weather. An', anyhow, I ain't never had the time when I could get the money's worth out o' this dress, an' it a dead loss, seein' as the customer died sudden an' did n't leave a smitch behind her to pay her bills. There's risks in dressmakin'. I never have

no call t' buy fancy things for myself. Plain black's plenty good enough for me, I says t' Annamae."

"I'm sure it's very becoming, Mrs. Pretty, that shade of purple," Georgia said, leaning against the door and, pen in hand, surveying Mrs. Pretty admiringly. "Thank you so much for thinking of me and coming in. But I don't feel up to parties yet. And besides, I've loads of work to do."

"Seems just like I can't make up my mind to go, somehow," Mrs. Pretty declared. "I ain't never got over the feelin' of wearin' black after Mr. Pretty. But keepin' company ain't what it used t' be, an' Annamae's runnin' with that Kathleen Mooney. Nothin' can't stop her. Annamae says I'm behind the times—'not in it, mommer,' 's what Annamae always says. An' so, thinks I, I'll just go an' let 'em see as how Annamae's got a natural pectorator."

"You're just right to go," Georgia said heartily. "Just let them see you in that grand gown and they'll know you're not a bit behind the times."

So Mrs. Pretty went and Georgia returned to further consideration of Third-Year English: "Sir Roger de Coverley and the Widow." Until Mrs. Pretty had knocked, the various discussions of Sir Roger's love-affair had seemed rather good, quite unusually clever for just Third-Year girls and boys, and her heart had warmed with the enthusiasm of the true teacher. But now, no amount of red ink on her pen brought back her thoughts to those carefully margined pages. More interesting seemed

possible romantic occurrences down at the Boys' Club. Theodosia had looked unusually well in her tulip-leaf green gown. That gray green was just Theodosia's color. And Theodosia danced well, as naturally as a tulip in a spring breeze. And she need n't sniff at that nice, big, cherub-faced Mr. Wedgwood, and think herself so immune. Theodosia, in spite of her enthusiasm for the Suffrage and her eight years of hard service, was just like any other woman — except herself. If ever woman was immune, had full cause to be immune, it was she, Georgia Frame. More than ever now since the trolley ride to Bloomfield! Mr. Leaf's faith in her had been her final consecration after her passionate declaration of principle at Headquarters. Of course, after that Christmas dinner at Dr. Craig's, and the little supper at the Blue Boar, she had been rather low-spirited, rather downhearted. Howard Craig always did give her the blues. They had so much to remember in common, and then he had seen her in the dark valley. He brought back old times too vividly. That was the disturbing thing about him. And yet there was the other reason for his giving her the blues. He stood for all the things she must n't have, the things she scorned — and liked. He meant rest and shelter and the gracious things of life — that were n't for her. Those were the things that stood for bondage. And she stood for renunciation, in order to give freedom to the women of ages after her, and as well to keep her

---

own soul free, to spread her wings. As Leaf had said so splendidly of himself, she was cut out of the things that other women have and want; she was cut out in order to secure a fuller and higher attainment to the women that were to follow her. In England the leaders of the Cause were risking everything to gain the great end. She could not be a traitor and flinch in giving her little all. It was so very little. And now Leaf had come into her life and with his faith reconsecrated her. With his faith? With his more than faith. And yet she must not be sorry for him. Here was the inevitable triangle, full in the ascendant: Craig, human, tender, restful, tempting her always to — to let go; Leaf, isolated, passionately repressed, stimulating, rousing her to her highest endeavor; she herself — What was she herself? She sat up with a long breath and dipped her pen resolutely into the ink. The thing for her to do was to give up teaching next year, take the pittance she had and go away where great movements were afoot, where there was no return after the final plunge. There she could be true to herself and to Leaf — and to Howard Craig — ? At any rate, he had all those women to choose from in the big houses on the Boulevard.

But it was no use trying to work any longer. The rest she could do in the morning after an early rising. She put down her pen and leaned her chin in her palms on the broad old desk, facing the little picture of her mother.

"Then, mother," she whispered, — "then I can spread my wings and really fly. Here, it's just beating and beating against — miserable human things."

Miserable human things! The miserable nature in us that held us down to what our hearts craved, that made us love to be loved and cared for, made us want a home full of those to love us and for us to love, and lured us into filling our lives with the foolish, petty, inconsequent things that grew out of the narrow relations of family life, that were no part of the great world movement toward the enfranchisement of women. And all the time, the chance of — of being miserable, of having one's life spoiled — by a man! Had n't she been trained up and away from such belittlement, out and on, miles beyond, into the largest freedom and the surest aloofness? And now Leaf — poor boy! — had n't he steadied her, poised her, in the direct proof that his own nameless existence gave of the wrongs of women, in the splendid faith of his vision of her — of her as the superwoman! Oh, how keen and fine and rarefied was such faith as compared with the love most men gave to women. Poor boy! How glorious he was! As gloriously lonely as the peak of the Matterhorn. And she was his vision.

From downstairs, through the quiet of the halls, came the sharp slam of the vestibule door. Theodosia always slammed that door. Then came footsteps, lingering and uncertain, up the uncarpeted



stairs; then voices, a man's and Theodosia's, not hostile in tone, rather murmurous, and a long pause at the door.

Out of the pause, the man's footsteps began to go downstairs again, and Theodosia came in.

"My dear! Working still!" she exclaimed, dropping into the morris chair. "Everybody asked for you and missed you terribly." The hood of her white Shaker cape had fallen back and the wind had been doing many pleasant things to her ruddy hair and her cheeks. "That was Mr. Wedgwood — who brought me home."

Georgia was sorting out the themes for early morning work. "I thought so," she said. "There were crackers and ginger ale. Why did n't you ask him in?"

Theodosia yawned and drew off one long white glove. "Oh, we had ice-cream and cake down there, and besides, he had to go back about the lights. But it was a real go, Georgia! Everybody said so. And the decorations were really lovely, all the work of the boys."

Georgia put away her pens and leaned back sleepily. "You look awfully pretty, Theodosia, as you're probably aware," she said. "That's why Mr. Wedgwood lingered so, was n't it?"

"Lingered so!" Theodosia said scornfully. "I was making a point, and he had to. Any gentleman would have. The whole thing to-night was convincing."



"Was it!" It was easy to see that Theodosia was talking quite from an external stratum of thought. She had entered the room, but was still utterly removed in her mind. "I knew it would be, of course — you, especially, in that stunning Burne-Jones gown."

"You're sleepy and frivolous, my dear! I'm not, even after dancing every dance and every extra. It makes dancing entirely different when it has a purpose. And I made every one of mine tell, I'm sure."

"Tell? How do you mean? What do you suppose really was accomplished — that is, permanently? I venture to say the girls and their 'gentlemen friends' all thought it awfully tame and wondered what you and the other swells were trying to do, and mimicked you behind your backs. That's the human nature of it."

Theodosia rolled her gloves into a little ball and stuffed them into the pocket of her cape. Then she contemplated her long, handsome white hands reflectively.

"Oh, there was lots of human nature there. Everybody except the younger club boys seemed sweet on somebody else. You would have burned up with scorn, my dear. Annamae and Kathleen were terribly languishing. But then they've never seen the other way. And I was different, of course — and Mr. Wedgwood. And I danced with every boy there."

---

"That was a revelation, I'll admit. You dance like a nymph, my dear. You always did, at college. And dancing is educational, of course."

"Oh, I don't mean that. But I made friends with everybody, and everybody seemed to have a good time, and there is going to be a girls' dancing-class and I'm going — and Mr. Wedgwood. Annamae and Kathleen thought it would be good fun. And the girls are going to invite the boys. Mrs. Webb said it had been very promising."

"Well, it does sound promising, all that," Georgia admitted, "but not so promising as — as" — and she caught up drowsy Peter from his basket and held him close under her neck — "as being just a puss and — and not caring."

Theodosia had got up and slipped quite out of her long white cape. The shine of the electric light in the chandelier over her head made an aureole of her hair.

"My dear," she said suddenly, "don't think me utterly crazy if I — ask you something. You know such heaps about — men. I don't. Is it — anything — if a man — kisses your hand?"

"A good deal — if you like him," Georgia said, out of Peter's purrs.

"But I don't! I loathe him!"

"Then it's only his lordly way."

"That's just what I said — that it was an impertinence."

"He's probably kissed a thousand other hands

without giving the matter a thought." Peter's small paw was nice on one's cheek.

"Of course!" Theodosia was going toward her room, busy with hooks on the under arm seam.

"Lips, too. That's a first principle in men's rights. Want any help?"

"No, thank you. That's the very point I was making," Theodosia called emphatically from her room.

## CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH ONE HERO IS RIGID IN THE ETIQUETTE OF VISIONS, THE OTHER FINDS SOME MONEY LYING IDLE, AND THE HEROINE FINDS LOOPHOLES IN LOGIC

RUSSET CENTER was sunny and open; but Russet Four Corners was sunnier, and sheltered under the hills that just missed being mountains. Spring took the Corners lovingly into her lap a full week before she took the Center, full two weeks before the young city in the valley on the north side of the range. So at the Corners tin lard buckets were already hanging on the sugar-maple trunks, orange-breasted grackles swung and chattered in the high, windy branches, and full-grown pussies tufted the willows along the road, on which the mud was so deep that Leaf's Ford was as useless as a locomotive. The chickens, too, expressed the spring — Mrs. Tibbetts's and Linda Rush's — ranging the melting fields, combs deeply pink, sun glinting on gloss of green-black Minorcans, blue-green, red-brown of Cornish Indian Games, russet of Rhode Islands, pure snow and speckled and streaked snow of Leghorns and Wyandottes and Plymouth Rocks. With what meditations they would have inspired Sebastian had she passed in the sunshine, instead of being shut up in the white-tiled, ether-scented operating-

room of the hospital, handing out sterilized instruments, holding prayers deep in her heart!

Leaf, in the sweet warm-cool of the violet house, that Saturday morning, did some meditating, not chicken-inspired. The sashes were well open, and the hose he was playing made rainbows against the glass and a soft swish on the big leaves and the hundreds of violets at a dollar a hundred. But neither was it of violets at a dollar a hundred that he was thinking. Perhaps, to be exact, he was n't thinking at all. Fancies, dreams, hopes, exaltations singing along behind prosaic impressions like violet temperature, violet ventilation, are not thinking. Hard to tell what they are! Leaf did n't try, but he felt them singing, at intervals whistled them in snatches, played them *piano*, *pianissimo*, *forte*, *molto fuoco*, in the showery spray — not using, of course, not even knowing, any such fantastic terms for his water music. But the theme of his playing! Ye immortal gods! Of that he was sure. How good the world was, now that he had told her!

Outside, Riley, and three new State boys just imported from Miss Jessup's in Denbigh, were opening hotbeds, tossing out straw, tossing in loam and manure. Riley was bossing the job, feeling big and free in new overalls and new authority. Mrs. Tibbetts was washing the kitchen windows, Jock trotting around with purposeless dog-purpose. Beyond the violets, in the next house, there were the spring things, like painted laughter: yellow genista, Easter

---

lilies, tulips, daffodils, primroses, purple and blue cineraria, luminous hanging pots of yellow oxalis. Such a time and such a place for thawing hopes and flying dreams!

Leaf turned off the water, swung his big hose round, and reversed his position, facing east, to spray the other side of the house. And just at that moment Georgia Frame picked her way across the mud around the angle of the road from the Center. She'd come on the 10.30 trolley, of course. He saw her through spray, framed in open sash, with a foreshortened foreground of thawing field that pretty soon would be Canterbury bells and snapdragon and stockgillies. The mud necessitated slow movements, wary crossings and recrossings, downcast eyes, occasional swayings and lithe springs. Quite acrobatic, traveling from Russet Center to Russet Four Corners when March was going out mild and muddy! Presently, however, the agile traveler in the short, trim black suit with the big white box of Belle Meade sweets under her arm, made a quick leap out of her frame of open sash and progressed more sedately under glass, along a higher sandy bit of road. Then, sure of her going, she dared lift her eyes to the mountains, and seemingly looked directly at Leaf in the violet house. In reality, she was looking at the patches of snow that still streaked the high ridges of the hills; but she was well aware of the glass houses shining there in the sun, wondering in which he was making things grow, thrilling with



the novel sense of being a Vision and with the dear sense of its being spring.

He turned off the hose. He would cut across the field and overtake her, bring her in among the spring things, and tell her to pick and pick to her heart's content — then have it always to remember — That was his impulse, because, even if he was only Leaf, he was a man, and the things he was exacting of himself were extraordinary. But he remembered himself, and turned on the hose again, smiling a little, strangely. Unreasoning impulse! The thing he had almost done was the very thing Craig would have done, caring "a heap" — any man would have done, long for her and possess himself of her actual presence. That was the last thing for him to do. He was n't in love with her. Besides, he was himself. None of the things other men did, could he do. He had to stop doing them — off short! To him she was his Vision. He must be rigid in the etiquette of Visions. Besides, he had had his share in seeing her.

But he turned off the hose again and went to the door.

"Smith!" he called over to the hotbeds.

Smith, very blue-eyed and freckle-nosed and large-eared and stocky, pelted across manure and loam heaps.

"Smith," he said, "I'm going to trust you. You remember Miss Frame that sang with you fellows Thanksgiving?"

"Bet your life!" Smith did.

"She's at Mrs. Rush's — likely for the day. Now here's the scheme. You're to cut this basketful of spring things, any you please — that's where I trust you, see! — and arrange them as you choose. Then watch your chance and when you see her leaving Mrs. Rush's, you hustle off to the Center and give 'em to her as she gets on the trolley. See?"

"Say you sent 'em?"

"Stupid! No. You brought 'em. Don't you see? And take your hat off, Smith, doing it, and keep it off talking to her."

"Keep it off talkin' t' her!"

"Of course, Smith. To every woman — always."

"She's different — but I don't see the use — always."

"Use is n't the point, Smith. It's the reason of it that's the point. Was n't your mother a woman — and — and mine? That's the point, Smith. Tell the other fellows. Make 'em see it, d' you hear?"

"Because our mothers were women, y' see," Smith was explaining presently out of a hotbed.

"That's right," Riley said. "That's dead sure — anyhow."

And meanwhile, unconscious cause of a quarter of the violets going thirsty and of deep turning over of things ethical in the hotbeds, Georgia came to the end of the sand, picked and swayed and leaped her way through deeper mud, and finally swung

herself around Linda's sagging gatepost into the spongy path between the lilac bushes with their fat green buds. At her "Hello," Linda stopped sweeping the porch and hurried down the steps, and Adelaide and Corilla ran out from under the evergreens where the snowdrops and scylla lay in little drifts among the brown. From behind the house came much cackling and crowing.

"Well, this is a surprise, and then it is n't!" Linda cried. "I've been wanting so much to see you I sort of thought you might come."

"I took the very first chance, I can tell you!" Georgia said in the interval of Linda's warm kiss and the several warm kisses and ecstatic hugs of the small girls, to whom went the white box. "I don't know where the winter's gone, except into school. There's not much left of me after that and correcting papers."

"The hideous winter! Just so it's gone! But you do look better — much. Not like the same person!"

"I am, though, the very same! But you, my dear, don't look a bit well. You look awfully tired, and you are."

The sunshine was quite unrelenting in its betrayal of Linda's pale fadedness — fine wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, quite a sprinkling of gray in the soft, pale-brown hair like Joy's. But the gay smile was there as she drew Georgia's arm through hers and led her round toward the cackling and crowing.

"Oh, don't, for mercy's sake, look at my wrinkles and ugliness. And I'm even a worse sight than usual this morning. Joy cried all night to stay in my arms, poor lammie! But I do want you to see Jack's chickens, and Carl is making a hotbed, like Mr. Leaf's. We're to have our own lettuce and radishes."

And by this time they had turned the corner and come upon the scene of the boys' activities, and Carl had left off mending sash and offered a putted hand in greeting, and Jack came running out of the big open barn, scattering his chickens, but had to postpone any ceremony because there was a white egg in each hand. The back yard was in a flood of sunshine that, paradoxically, had dried the mud and the snowy towels and napkins Mrs. Cuddy had left all night on the line to bleach.

"I should think all that reflected sunlight from Mr. Leaf's greenhouses would move the snow off the mountains faster than it has done," Georgia said with a long breath of delight. "This is lovely beyond words."

"It's too far, and they're too big to mind it, I guess," Carl said, aware of his first overalls.

"I'm not too big," Georgia laughed. "May n't we sit on the steps here awhile? I can sit inside of houses all I want to in town." The sunshine was joyous and the back yard an animated and encouraging scene, but there was as well a keen exhilaration in sitting there facing the mountains and the

fields where she herself walked as vision to Leaf's solitary fancy.

"Oh, I love to sit out here," Linda said. "But don't you mind, really? Somehow, I can't think of you and chickens and hotbeds and children. Now if we just had some peacocks or — or something artistic!"

"It's all artistic, if that's what you think I need, my dear. But I don't, do I, Adelaide?" And she squeezed Adelaide's small hand and sat down on the low porch step.

But she had to get up again for the cushion Jack brought, and then Linda sat down next her with Carl's red sweater over her shoulders, and the candy went round, and Jack vanished in the big barn, and Carl returned to his puttying, and the little girls ran to put a snowdrop plant into a little pot for a journey to town.

"Oh, he will be much better when the spring is really settled," Linda was saying, her chin in her palm. "Mothers know things that doctors don't dream of. Of course, Dr. Craig is wonderful, especially with children. But then—he admits it, too—a mother has an instinct about things. And I know — I just know it — that Joy will be better when it's warm and he can stay out all day."

"And all night, too," Georgia added. "That seems to be the great cure for everything these days."

But Linda had nothing to say for or against sleeping out all night. Instead she was following more



---

definitely her generalization about the instinct of mothers. "It's the most wonderful thing in the world to me," she was going on. "Of course, I don't know a thing about literature or science or such things. But when my baby cries and I understand and he's comforted, it's — it's — better than — than just knowledge. You'll laugh, of course."

"No, I shall not laugh, my dear. Why should I? My mother had it for me."

Linda twisted a loosened strand of hair into the hurried coil on top of her head. "But in your speeches you say things against it. You and Miss Pell and the others are dead against it, the papers say."

"Oh, my dear! Not against mothers — ever. And, anyhow, Theodosia is n't definitely against any one thing. She's just working at social reforms."

"Social reforms! Of course, I'm so out of things that terms are n't quite clear. But how can she tell she knows the — way things are?"

"She can't, of course, fundamentally. But she does do a lot for betterment."

Linda put her hand on Georgia's black sleeve, then took it quickly away. And she had had such pretty hands! "But you — you are against things, my dear, in your speeches, are n't you?"

Georgia reached for the hand and held it close, flushing quickly. "I'm just against — against women's — getting hurt," she hesitated; "against being a slave or plaything of — of man!"



Linda straightened up quickly, her young blush back. "My dear, if for one littlest minute you'd been in love, truly, with all your heart — you'd — you'd take your chance with the rest of us. I guess I'm frightfully old-fashioned, but I — I took my chance."

"I know you did, my dearest!" It was hard to modulate that tone.

"And I'd do it all over again," she went on hotly. "Not in that same wild fashion, of course. That was all wrong. But even now — after it all — I'd be unafraid to — to take a woman's chance. Your mother knew the sweetness of it."

"I suppose she did."

"And then she had you, and I have the children. That's the most beautiful part of love — not the 'you' part at all. That makes your risk all right — the children."

Georgia pressed her hand close. The pressure seemed to say what she could not ask.

"And little Joy —" Linda was going on. But she stopped for a moment. Her clear eyes had brimmed with tears. "Loving him and caring for him is — is almost like being in love again, it's such — keen sweetness. And then — then I know that God — understands about him."

Georgia said nothing in return. It was as if Linda, unskilled in music, had pressed every stop in the big organ of life — and made a harmony. But how fearful her logic was — full of loopholes!

Then Georgia forgot logic, seeming to see the little packets of letters in the deep middle drawer of her mother's desk. They would have proved Linda's point.

In the silence there was the genial chatter of the hens, even the crisp click of their pecking in the gravel. A shining black cockerel grew aware and crowed shrilly. Carl was sharply driving a nail. There were great sunbursts of white sparkliness on Mr. Leaf's glass houses.

"I would n't give — not for all the colleges in the world — that feeling a mother has when — when a little — new baby is put into her arms." Linda's voice was tuned hardly a half tone above the silence.

Several octaves higher rang the voices of Corilla and Adelaide, trotting around the house with the little pot of snowdrops.

"See, mother! It's ready," Corilla cried.

Linda caught them to her with a little laugh, looking into their rosy faces. "When you're big girls, you're going to college, are n't you, dears?" she said, with her swift smile. "And you're going to be ever so much smarter than mother. Mother can't say things."

"Mother Goose, you can," Adelaide protested, squirming away.

"Can't say things!" Georgia found herself echoing out a pretty, quick, deep mental process. "You say wonderful things, my dear — and you are things.

You're splendid, Linda. You prove just how great women are."

Linda had got up to shoo back the encroaching chickens. Evidently she had finished saying things. "Splendid!" she echoed in turn. "I'm just plain commonplace. But that's what I tell Mr. Leaf — only differently, of course. He is the only person I ever have to talk to except Dr. Craig and Mrs. Tibbetts."

"Mr. Leaf?"

"Yes — to take his chance for happiness and fall in love with some nice girl that likes what he likes, and then get married. He needs a wife if ever a man did."

Georgia laughed. "And won't he?"

"He says he won't. Declares he's never going to marry. Poor boy! I guess he's had his troubles."

"Is n't Mrs. Tibbetts all right?"

This time Linda laughed. "Oh, absolutely! Mrs. Tibbetts adores him and is an old dear. But he needs a good wife. And now let's go in. I heard my baby."

That night, long after Georgia had got home and put the snowdrops on the window-sill and disposed Smith's spring flowers on piano and desk and supper-table, and told Theodosia all about the day except the things that were forever to make it memorable — long after those happenings, something made the day memorable for Leaf. He was upstairs at his desk, calculating acid phosphate to the acre,

---

and not looking at blindfolded Hope with her stringless harp. Downstairs, Mrs. Tibbetts in the swept and garnished kitchen was half asleep and half reading the "Woman's Home Companion." The last time she had glanced at the high clock over the range it had said a quarter to nine. The next time she looked it was nine sharp and some one was knocking at the front door, a quick knock. She got up with a jump and ran to open it. Upstairs Leaf opened his door and stood listening. Mrs. Tibbetts fumbled. Those glasses had slid off her nose!

"Is Mr. Leaf in?" said a voice, as frog songs and spring night came in.

"Yes, I'm in," Leaf called, starting down. "Come up, won't you? It's warmer up here." It was Howard Craig — wanting him!

Then out of the dark came a hearty handshake and a greeting and the smell of a mighty good cigar thrown on the flagstones outside, and Dr. Craig went up the easy-going old stairs. Thank God, Billy Leaf was n't sick and needing him!

"Surprising you, I'll wager," Craig said, over the grip on the threshold upstairs, taking in, behind Leaf in his shirt-sleeves, the lamplit room, the table with the books and papers, the big desk littered with seed packages, labels, things written and to be written, and the one picture on the walls, blindfolded Hope with her harp. That picture was a startling and significant symptom. Leaf with a Watts on his wall!

"Glad to see you, anyhow," Leaf was saying, helping off with the motor-coat and pushing forward a chair. "Dull work, calculating fertilizer. 'D rather eat the vegetables."

"Fact is," Craig began promptly, getting comfortable in the Windsor armchair, "I've come on a sort of agrarian scheme — a matter of harvest in years to come. May as well say it — come for another lift!" And he threw back his fine head with the crinkly blond hair and laughed heartily.

Leaf remembered head and laugh and a bamboo pole up among new foliage. "Wagon's at your service," he laughed back. "I'll take you anywhere you say." He stopped short in the memory-play. It was no time to bring in three small trout for the girl's cat next door.

Craig, too, grew serious, leaned forward, brought the fist of his right hand firmly into the palm of his left.

"It's a favor I want to ask," he plunged in. "Don't misunderstand and think it's the other way. I know you won't. That day at dinner — you remember you told of your scheme for — for helping State wards — boys — here on your farm? It's great." He was flushing a little, undoing the clench of his hands and bringing finger-tips tensely against finger-tips till they reddened with the pressure. "I'd like mightily to go into it with a — a little money that's lying idle — doing nobody any good."



Leaf, too, had reddened. Fool! Why should he? Why should he want to — to hit back? Hit back at nothing! Had Craig really not heard his shouted secret that day so long ago? He looked every inch a man, sitting there waiting to get thrown down. And he cared a heap — for her!

All this inside Leaf so hot and bitter that it must show in his face. But it did n't. Craig was thinking only of the fine, broad brow under the unruly cowlick; the fine, firm lips and clear brown, lean cheeks, like those of some young hermit pure from cold forest springs and scant forest fare.

So little did the inward tinge the outward that Leaf smiled. "I did lay things pretty bare that day," he said. "The champagne did it, I guess — and the good time generally." And the inside added, "She did it!" — "But there's no occasion — absolutely — for any one's helping."

"Oh, Lord! Not helping!" Craig threw in.

"I did n't mean — helping — in the sense you think. I meant sort of partnership helping, that's all." Craig did not know his fashion of narrowing his eyes and staring at the light as if he were following a wavering thread of possibility. He always seemed to get at his thought in that fashion. "You see, with me, it's just — just like my family — sort of brothers — all working together and things not coming — too easy. All the family I've got, you see." And at this unrhetical termination, he looked full and kindly into Craig's eyes and held



out his hand for another grip. "Thanks all the same!"

"Lord! Thanks!" Craig began; then swerved round genially. "Anyhow, sometimes let me come out and plough, will you? I'd like just good brown earth and a few fishworms in the furrow after a winter of sick folk."

"The place is open to you at any time," Leaf said. Then, "And Mrs. Rush? Is she going to have to give him up — the little chap?"

Craig drew a long breath and rose. "Spring will tell. He's been slipping his anchor."

"Thought so. But she'll keep him moored if courage can do it."

"Courage can't," Craig said, taking his coat. "Fine old house you have here. Always in the family?"

"No. Bought it from the Gould estate. Good location for gardens."

Mrs. Tibbetts had lighted the swinging red hall lamp and was waiting her chance with the kitchen door ajar.

"Land! Goin' a'ready!" she exclaimed to the two tall men on the stairs. "Just got together, a basket of eggs — hens just outdoin' themselves a-layin'. An' inside I poked a little piece for that Chinee you got. Got it in missionary meetin' at the Center, an' thinks I, it'll be just the thing for Dr. Craig's Chinee. 'The Dyin' Pagan' is the name."

---

"Fow will be delighted," Craig said gallantly, over Mrs. Tibbetts's hand and the basket of eggs. "And I'll profit by the eggs."

Flying home against a warm wind that smelt of sap, he was wondering whether to tell Georgia Frame that he had got himself — well, humiliated, for her sake and the memory of her shrug and her unfinished exclamation that night in the Blue Boar. And then he went on from wondering to remembering something that had occasioned him no little wonder. It was that sudden meeting with her and Leaf the day of the sugar-snow, as they had alighted from the Bloomfield car and he had not run over them. It would be just as well to tell her that, for her sake, he had been ready to help her friend.

Meanwhile her friend was quite forgetting the surprising interview in the study of a small green time-table. He was looking up trains for Holton: "6.13 A.M.; 2.11 P.M." the fine print said under his finger-tip. And all the time his brain was revolving swiftly and turning out quite another product, of a nature more complex than railway regulations. Complex in nature, perhaps, but resolved, at his white heat, into a singular simplicity. Matter of three component parts; first a determination; then an alternative not left to his own choosing. And the determination was as follows: "I will go as soon as I can get away, up into the old hill-country and find out, if I can, who I am, what's back of me." And the alternative: "If I am just Leaf — nameless

— dishonor back of me — then I'll drift — and she's my Vision. If I find myself — find my name — honor back of me — then — then I'm in for it, first woman!"

Fate did things for him more simply still.

## CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH MISS PENROSE TALKS OF TROUT AND  
FISHERMEN, AND A HERO HEARS SOME THINGS  
AND REMEMBERS OTHERS

THAT Sunday afternoon coral maple blooms were dropping over the wall into the brick-paved yard of the hospital, and the blue May sky was as early Italian as if it looked down on Assisi, and Giotto had painted it. It was a lazy-feeling day and the nuns were not doing the so-many-times-each-way to make a mile. Sister Perpetua had calculated it exactly. To-day they sat on the benches against the wall or sauntered back and forth with pauses among the pigeons pecking between the bricks, or for converse with the cats sunning themselves and watching for robins on the top of the wall. Abraham of the bushy tail already had the blood of a robin upon his cat soul.

"I'd rather die in bad weather, if I was choosing," Sister Mary John had just been saying, smothering a spring yawn. "Then the change would mean so much more to you. Like once when I went from New York in a blizzard to Florida. Oh my, but it was wonderful! Snow — then orange trees in bloom in the sun! And the smell of them!"

"Then, anyhow, you would n't hate so to go,"

said Sister Rose, a new little nun just out of her white veil.

"But it is n't when you choose, Sisters. It's like taking God's will lightly to be saying so," cautioned Sister Monica. "It's when you're called. The poor thing upstairs is n't wanting to go, God help her."

"I'm glad she can't see how — how sweet it is out here," Sister Rose ventured again gently. "'T would just make it harder."

"Oh, she can see well enough. Sister Sebastian has all the windows open for her and flowers on the table, to keep her gay, she says."

"Sister Sebastian says the great saints were always gay in their hearts," Sister Rose said loyally, "and that we must live so that we can go gayly into Heaven."

And upstairs it was almost gay in Miss Penrose's room, with the afternoon sun falling in through new leaves at the window and more flowers from Georgia Frame on the stand at the bedside. This time they were wild flowers: trilliums, and bloodroot, and violets white and blue and purple, and brook forget-me-nots. Riley and Smith had been in the woods Saturday afternoon; so said the little note that came with the flowers Sunday morning, written in the big round hand and signed, "Yours truly, James Riley and John Smith." Poor little meaningless names! Trivial little makeshifts for the inherited dignities that by rights were theirs! Back very

promptly had gone a note of thanks on Georgia's best black-bordered paper with her monogram delicately traced in black, and her thanks in English as careful as if she had been writing to the President to thank him for granting the Suffrage, and every bit as warm. And by some chance the note, when shown to Leaf, was lost in the depths of his inner vest pocket. "Must 'a' got swept up with the trash," Mrs. Tibbetts decided. "My eyes ain't what they used to be. Or Jock worried it to bits and the wind blowed it away, to help make birds' nests." But to Leaf, reading it for the *n*th time in the seclusion of the upstairs with the door shut, or of the far field under the mountain where he was sowing beans and peas, it made a complete nest of itself, full of fledgling dreams, until suddenly a name it mentioned startled the dreams away. "The dear flowers," the delicate, even writing said, "after making me very happy, are going to carry happiness to some one that needs it much more than I do,—to Miss Penrose, a poor lady in the hospital who will not be here another spring. I thought you would like to know just how much good your flowers are doing, and just where the good is going." There was the name that had scattered dreams! Miss Penrose, who would "not be here another spring!" The strangeness of the connection struck him sharp as a blow. Miss Penrose — and Miss Frame was her friend — and Miss Frame had lived in Holton! And Miss Penrose was due elsewhere before an-



other spring, possibly many months before another spring! Possibly her departure might be at a very early date! And suppose — suppose Miss Penrose had in her possession something — something that was his!

When this thought at last sprang full-armed into his consciousness, he was out in the field under the mountain with his right hand in a bag of peas. He put down seeder and seed, reckless of blackbirds wheeling above, and went over the sweet fine soil to the house. Mrs. Tibbetts was sweeping the kitchen, windows wide open, letting out her thin old voice in "Jerusalem the Golden." The boys were at school, all except Riley off setting out lettuce.

Leaf leaned in at the window. "Please, ma'am," he began —

"Land, Billy! How you did make me jump! An' you're white as linen. Ain't sunstruck, be y'?"

"Moonstruck!" he laughed. "I'm all right. Just a little crazy. Sit down and listen and see if I'm not."

Mrs. Tibbetts dropped into the rocker. "An' for a minute, thinks I, it's little Joy dead," she said breathlessly.

"Oh, it's nothing much, perhaps, after all," he said, leaning on the sill, hand in rampant cowlick. "Just a name, ma'am, and a — a chance. There's a — a Miss Penrose at the hospital, dying, it seems. Do you — "

"How 'd y' come to hear about it, Billy? Did n't

send you no word, did she?" The broom slid sharply to the floor.

"Me? Not a word. Just heard about it through some — some flowers that went there. Do you suppose she might — might know about me, ma'am?"

"She mought an' she mought n't. 'T ain't an uncommon name in these parts. But, law me, Billy, what's the use of rummagin'? Ain't things well enough? Ain't you sorter — sorter captain, anyhow?"

"Am I? Used to be!"

"Time enough to do your rummagin' when — when you're havin' a marryin' spell. Then, if she's got any gumption, what'll she care, anyhow? It's you she'll be a-lovin'." That was the very thing the heroine had said in the serial running in the "Woman's Home Companion."

"Marrying was not what I was talking about," Leaf said, more sharply than she had ever heard him speak. "Two hours till supper, is n't it?" And then he had disappeared around the corner of the house, presently a far figure dropping peas down in the field under the mountain.

"It's her — and the spring, that's sure," Mrs. Tibbetts confided to the broom. "An' what's the use? No more show than a — candle-moth!"

All this happening in field and kitchen, the afternoon after that gay Sunday afternoon in Miss Penrose's room, which was so sweet with the flowers that had started the whole happening! Fateful

blossoms, those that Riley and Smith had gathered that Saturday! Fateful in the long train of associations that started the fuse in Leaf's mind! Fateful in the faltering words they overheard on the stand by Miss Penrose's narrow white bed. And no more show at living than a candle-moth had Miss Penrose, her breath a-flutter between her pale lips, and her heavy eyes seeing far-away, long-ago things among the twinkling new leaves outside the window.

To Georgia, when she had tiptoed in with her basket of flowers, and whispered a moment with Sebastian, Miss Penrose faintly smiled a summons to come nearer.

"Next time you come," she whispered, when Georgia took her hand and bent down, "next time, we'll talk about the dress and — and choose the color. Not green — not green. You know why, dear? That's the — the forsaken color. But" — her voice seemed to lose itself in searching for her thought — "but I never wore it — not I, my dear!"

"Pink's your color, Miss Penrose. That's sure," Georgia said gayly. "I'll come again soon, with samples."

Then she had gone away very hastily, after Sebastian's kiss and murmured "God is good. She'll go easily — just as you are going now — out into the sunshine. Come again soon to see me. I have something to tell you." Very quick and light echoed her footsteps down the long corridor. It was a good

deal better not to linger and run into Howard Craig on his afternoon rounds.

From Georgia, Miss Penrose's eyes had gone to the flowers Sebastian had put into the glass bowl at her bedside. Now and then a small smile twitched her lip, as if the flowers were rousing old humor. After a long quiet that might have been a doze, had it not been for that faint ghost of mirth, she looked at Sebastian, sitting by the window with a little black book in her hand.

Sebastian felt the look and lifted her eyes, smiling. "Shall I read you a bit?" she said. "It may put you to sleep. It's a very nice psalm, a very restful one — for tired people."

The door into the ward was closed.

Miss Penrose drew a quick, sharp breath, and tried to drag herself up among her pillows. "Oh, you cool, cool white nuns!" she whispered, as Sebastian's arm gently settled her. The little smile twitching at her white lips gave a strange new expression to her face. "If you only knew what those — those flowers are — making me remember."

"Pleasant things, I know," Sebastian said, taking a nerveless hand in her strong ones. "Fields at home and your —"

"Fields!" The little smile broke into as strange a murmur of a laugh. "Not fields — ever — those flowers! Don't you know? Deep glens and a — a brook where — where trout hide — from men."

Sebastian could feel the quick, hot pulse in the

finger-tips that pressed her hand. "Hide — from men!" Miss Penrose repeated, slowly, faintly. "But what's the use? Men have a — a right to — to everything."

"What a lovely memory!" Sebastian said gently. "I wish I had some country memories like yours! I was a city girl, you see, and only a — "

Miss Penrose drew Sebastian's hand close to her cheek. "Oh, you sweet, sweet, cool, white nun you!" she whispered on. "Like mine, the memories!" The little smile was again twitching her lips, quite mirthlessly. Her weak, wild heart-beats had sent a faint flush into her pallid cheeks. "Just suppose — suppose — I should tell you — my memories! What would you do — then, my dear?"

"Do! Why, what could I do but listen and love you!" Sebastian laughed tenderly. "Oh, but I have heard lots and lots of memories! And what is there to do but listen, and be sorry if they're sad, and go on loving, as Our Lord did! What stories Mary and Martha and the Apostles must have had to tell Him!"

"Oh, no — no! Not that kind — of love. It's you — I want to — to love me. That other — frightens me."

Then Sebastian felt a chill come into the finger-tips pressing her palm and saw the color flutter out of the cheeks. "I shall always love you just the same, dear, dear woman!" she said, softly, bending down to her. "And perhaps — perhaps — much

I can guess of what you remember. And perhaps — perhaps what you remember some one else ought to — to know and remember.”

Miss Penrose's eyes looked large at the flowers. “There was a man — fishing — in the brook — that day,” she began to whisper rapidly. “Men have a right — to everything — you see. I wore my hair — in those days, in braids — long braids — with red bows. He was beautiful — like a prince in those corduroys — throwing his line. And he — he kissed me. And there was cress — in the brook. Every day I gathered the cress — for my uncle. You see, dear — dear — I had no mother to talk to. And, dear — dear — love is so mighty and the — the trout have no chance.”

“I know, my darling! I know — no chance without God!”

“Your love, dear — dear! I can't ever tell — God.”

“I will tell — God — for you, dear! And is there — some one — some one very near you — to tell?”

“Two to tell! Two to tell!” she whispered. “And that ugly — big cap that you wear! Have n't you any — any ears? You see, always — since — I have been a dressmaker and I made — made pretty things — not ugly things — like nuns' caps. Two to tell, dear — dear! One I love — my boy! One — I ought to hate. Three — I love I say. Four — I love — Close dear — dear — your ugly cap! Ssh! You'll scream — with surprise —”



That night, down in the office, Sebastian waited at the desk under the big black crucifix. Craig was still in the wards, with Sister Monica. The window was open to the breeze, and the ring on the window shade tapped the sill. Sebastian's right hand covered the silver cross on the black cord around her neck. Her face, in the shadow of her cap, looked ten years older than the face that had touched Georgia Frame six hours before. She was saying over and over again to herself the prayer with which she always went into the operating-room.

Outside there was a quick step. Craig came in and shut the door. Sebastian rose. His face, too, showed intensive experience.

"And where is she to be taken?" he said, as if only continuing what had gone before.

"To Penrose Mills, above Holton, I suppose. That's the place she — she told me about."

"Any of her family living, do you suppose? Any one we ought to notify?"

Sebastian's firm right hand caught the side of the desk. "Two we ought to notify. One—I can—can tell. The other you must—must help me find."

"Anything—anything I can do!" he said. "Somehow it's knocked me out. And you, too."

"Me! Only a little. In—in operations you've never seen me—flinch, have you?"

"Never."

"That's because God is with me. I must n't flinch now—and you must n't."

"Why should I? I will not. I can't imagine. Say it out. Don't be afraid."

"It's to right wrong I'm telling you. But — but I can't look at you — while I do it. I can't. There's a star out there — over those roofs. Go to the window and look."

He went. His shoulders looked big and broad enough to bear anything, his head proud enough to face anything. But not this! Sebastian said her prayer with close-shut eyes.

"Remember Christ and — and the woman accused," she said at last. "Somewhere — you have a — a brother — of your name. Miss Penrose was his — his mother. You — you must love him — much."

The silence seemed hours, deep as eternity. When Craig turned, Sebastian was on her knees, her head in her hands, under the big crucifix. He took out his fine gold watch; then put it unopened back into his pocket.

"I see," he said, after a moment. "Don't kneel any longer. I know what you're praying for."

"That men may — may see," she said. "That's the biggest prayer in the world."

"I know it. And the most hopeless."

"No. No prayer is hopeless. And this least of all, if men will pray that they may see."

"And my brother? You must tell me how to find him."

"This is what I know — poor dear woman —

whispered through my ugly cap! He was a State charge till he was seven years old. Then her uncle, Dr. Penrose, in the hills above Holton, found him and — and” — She was wondering at the degree of paleness Craig’s face had attained, and fearful of his hands clenching so tightly the back of the high desk chair — “and gave him to a family named — named — ”

“Tibbetts?” Craig whispered.

“Tibbetts, of Penrose Mills, and — ”

Craig suddenly threw back his head with a strange laugh. “I know my brother,” he said. “He’s a good man.”

Outside Cox was waiting with the runabout.

“You can go home. I’ll drive myself.” Craig said, so hoarsely that Cox, tipping his cap, wondered where he had got his cold.

Then he let her go, out into the dark, — whirring, whirring cylinders and brain, heart pounding, on until from the hills the city lights seemed only fire-flies in the valley. And he was hearing two voices — a boy’s and a woman’s — out of a far-away time — speaking things that now he understood. The boy was saying, “I don’t know nothing — nothing about my father ’cept that he — he was a — mean coward!” And the other voice was his mother’s saying fearfully, delicately, out of tremulous lips, “I know you better — better than you know yourself, dear. I know what you’re made of. That’s why I’m — afraid.”

---

Presently, out of the high dark of the hilltops, things grew familiar — straggling street, great bulk of meeting-house with spire lost in night, black bulk of sleeping houses — then a road dipping down into a valley of night. It was Denbigh, of course. Then another voice came to him — Georgia's voice — and she was saying slowly, delicately, fearful of hurting him with the old sorrow — "It was of your father's funeral I was thinking. I remember it all so well — all the carriages and the band of sad music and the great men that were there. Mother said that men that help make history were there. — And the governor was there. And mother's saying that you had a great memory to live up to!"

## CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH ONE QUESTION IS ANSWERED FOR ONE  
HERO, AND, FOR THE OTHER HERO, AN OLD QUES-  
TION SEEMS NEVER TO BE ANSWERED

FATE came to Leaf so promptly that he had no need of rummaging. It came in at the white picket gate in front of the house, called Mrs. Tibbetts on a run to the door with its sharp ring, greeted her absently and palely, and then went out to find Leaf, over the seeded fields to the furrow where he was sowing peas. It made no announcement of itself till Leaf turned the red seeder on an uptrip, and called out, faintly in his amazement,—

“Well — hello!”

“Hello!” Craig said. “Can you stop a minute — to hear something?”

“Sure!” And down went the red seeder. Craig looked like an old man. It was n’t a hot day. The breeze was chill. But he had his hat off, in a tightly clenched hand, and there were beads of sweat on his forehead. He needed a shave badly.

“Lots of crows and blackbirds?” he said, out of rigid lips, trying to smile.

“Lots. Anything the matter? Can I help — anyway?”

“Nothing the matter — only — Say, that day

---

---

years ago — on the wagon — you said there was a — heap of things ahead — for me."

"Was n't there?" What under the sweet blue heaven was the matter!

"All the time, there was — this! I've lived through hearing it. Can you?"

Leaf laughed and ran his hand through that cowlick. "The worst I know," he said, "is — is not hearing things — just dead silence."

Jock had drawn near to participate, sitting on his haunches with lolling tongue and genial eyes.

"Then it's — this. I've found out things. That's what's the matter. And my father was a — damned mean coward."

Leaf flamed and bit into his lower lip. "What of it?"

"You."

In the silence a blackbird lighted on the handle of the seeder. Leaf was seeing a yellow paper in the Bible, scrawled with the names of trout fishermen. In his mind he was running his finger down the page — to a name.

Then Craig's hand touched his. "Shake — before you hate me," he said huskily. "We're brothers, you know."

Leaf drew a long breath and waited the eternity of a second. In it he was driving out of his mind a devil that might mean hate, facing a certainty that meant utter loss. Then he shied on Craig the flicker of a smile, and held out his hand.



"Hate you!" he said, as they gripped. "He played us both — false. That makes us double brothers. Is the secret ours?"

"Ours."

"For myself — I don't care," Leaf said presently, out of thin, thin lips, kicking a hole in the fine loam as the words hissed out. "But for her — I'd throttle him. Where is she? My — mother?"

Craig put on his hat. "At the hospital," he said. "I was trying to get to that part. There's so much."

Leaf started. "At the hospital! Since when?"

"We knew — this — only Sunday night. She's been my patient for months."

"For months! Oh, damn it! Hurry on! If it were your mother —"

Craig put his arm around his shoulder. "There's no — hurry," he said gently. "She is — dead."

And more orange-throated blackbirds whistled over their heads and settled on Leaf's straight rows of peas; and Jock, being unaccustomed to great crises, whined a little and shifted his paws.

Then Craig cleared his throat and said quietly and practically, "I have the car. I'll take you to town. We'll go at once to see her. To-morrow she goes to Penrose Mills."

And when they had gone in silence over the sweet brown fields, there was Mrs. Tibbetts halfway down the garden, waiting for them, but pretending she had been looking for eggs. Her wrinkled hands

trembled as she put the eggs into her apron. Her blue, blue eyes brimmed with tears.

"I mistrusted somethin' was wrong, Billy," she said. "Somethin's been tellin' me. What's wrong, Doctor?"

Leaf's arm went round her waist as if she had been a girl. "Wrong, ma'am!" he said, faintly smiling. "Right, you mean. I've found my — my other mother. I'm hurrying now to see her."

"Honest to goodness, Billy! Then you won't have no more need of —"

"More need than ever, ma'am. My other mother is — dead. So I must hurry. I'll tell you all about her when I — come home."

Mrs. Tibbetts held his shoulders with her tremulous hands. "To-night, Billy?"

"Not to-night, ma'am. When I have — finished. You'll trust me and wait?"

"Land o' love! Wait! Billy Leaf! Ez if I would n't — till Judgment! You take care o' him, won't you, Doctor? I'm thankful you air a doctor an' his friend."

"All that and —" Craig began, clasping her hand. "I'll return him in good condition, I promise."

On the way in, the two behind Cox were silent, looking ahead, except once. Then Leaf, out of a long breath, said evenly, "And I can remember when he died — the big headlines that praised him."

Craig winced. "I can remember — much more," he said.

It was after sunset when they reached the hospital. Sebastian was in the office watching for them. She did not wait to be told when Leaf came in, holding his hat boyishly before him with both hands, his face white, a strange wideness in the melancholy eyes under the rampant cowlick.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, quite without even the ceremony of shaking hands. "You will always be glad." And then she took him upstairs, along corridors filling with twilight, to a little room at the far end of the building.

As he entered, he first saw the young leaves outside of the wide-open windows. Behind them, in the primrose afterglow, hung a slender sickle of young moon. As slender and as pale, on the narrow white bed, lay his mother.

Sebastian flashed on the electric light in the passage when, an hour afterwards, she came to take him away, but she did not go in. During the moment she waited, the room was quite still. Then Leaf came and stood in the door.

"It would have been better if she had told me years ago," he whispered promptly. "She would have liked to help me in the flowers. She could have made them grow."

He looked much like a little boy, tall, slender man as he was, Sebastian was thinking. His hair was roughened as if a woman's hand had been strok-

ing it, and one cheek was flushed as if it had lain on a woman's bosom. And his eyes, under their black lashes, had all the directness of a child's. God help him!

But she said, "I wish she had, dear! But she could n't! She was such a girl of a woman, and so afraid!"

"Afraid! Not of me!"

"Not of you, of course! Never — if she had known you! But of the — the world."

"My God! What's the world!"

"To women? Don't you know? Not just — as Christ was."

His sensitive lips curled in thin scorn. "And he — that man — was a judge, was n't he?"

"A famous judge."

"The world's pretty — pretty rotten."

"And this is the core, dear — where we stand." Sebastian's hand was on his arm. "She was afraid of the rottenness."

"Somehow," he veered off, "I've thought always of — old mothers. She's not. Are you — sure she's mine?"

"Quite sure. She is lovely, is n't she? Shan't we look at her together?"

"I've been holding her hand — in both mine. It's very small, is n't it! And my fingers are like hers — only bigger. I don't know much about — women."

"Her hair is pretty, there in the little soft waves,

is n't it? I combed it that way because she liked it so."

"The gown is pretty, too,—like one I saw once on a bride coming out of a church. And all the flowers— Oh, but she shall have bushels of lilies-of-the-valley! and the new Killarney!"

"Those flowers there—the wild ones—I've kept because your mother loved the person who brought them to her—Miss Frame, Dr. Craig's friend. She made her gay little visits that cheered her up."

Only the hall light fell into the fragrant little room. Sebastian could not see his face. He put out his hand to the iron rod along the foot of the bed.

"Oh, I see!" he said vaguely. "I see. I—had forgotten. I understand. They cheered her up, did they! Bless her!"

"Always. There were many jokes about pretty clothes and colors and —"

He interrupted with a light touch on her arm. "Would you let me—stay here all night, with my mother?" he was saying. "It's my only chance, you see."

Sebastian's veteran heart felt a new pang. "Of course, dear child, you shall," she said. "And now I'm going to get you a glass of milk and some crackers. And you can rest in that big chair."

"I shan't sleep. Would you? The night's thick with stars, is n't it!"

Craig, coming out of his office at that moment, was unaware of stars. He was going to do the only thing he could do in this new heaven and new earth where all nights were starless — tell Georgia Frame the truth. And after telling her! Not even sunrise. That he knew.

Suppose Miss Pell were at home, greeting him with a sickly theory when he held a sword in his heart! But she was not. It was the night of the girls' dancing-class down at the Boys' Club. Georgia was darning stockings by the lamp, fine black silk drawn weblike over slim white hand. Peter was asleep in her lap. The windows, wide open to the May, let in a soft rustle of new leaves. She was thinking of her last summer's blue *crêpe de chine*, wondering how much it would cost to have it dyed black. In intervals, too, she was having flashes of Craig's eyes when he said — things — then of Leaf's words, "Not because — because you're sorry for me, first woman!" Was she just sorry for him? She bit the end of her darning-silk with her even white teeth, forgetting her dentist. And the *crêpe de chine* was wide in the skirt and the new skirts were fearfully narrow.

And then the tube whistled. She sprang up, with a wild heart-beat. Peter slid to the floor.

"Yes?"

"Miss Frame? Alone?"

"Who is it?"

"Howard Craig. And you are alone?"



Was it Howard Craig — that quenched voice! "Yes, I'm alone. Come up."

And then, stocking over hand, thimble on finger, she stood waiting, with those wild heart-beats pounding under her soft black blouse. At his step outside she opened the door.

"I've frightened you," he said, hat off, holding her hand close. "There's nothing to frighten you."

"You are as pale as — Something's wrong. It is n't Theodosia!"

"Lord, no!" He threw down his hat and went over to the mantel. Should he sit or stand to tell her this thing?

She was drawing the stocking off her white hand, dropping the gold thimble into her little basket.

"Sit down there, in mother's desk chair," she said gently. "I'm not frightened. I have lots of pluck. Don't you know I have?"

"Of course I know it."

"It is n't little Joy? That would n't make you so pale."

Little Joy seemed a thousand years ago. "Oh, no," he said. How could he tell her, after hearing the faint click of thimble against scissors in that small basket, down in the depths of sweet, womanish things! after seeing that delicate, anxious line between her brows, — the line he had so often seen on a mother's brow over the cradle of a child!

"Nothing about — Mr. Leaf?" she was going on,

He leaned forward, fist of his right hand hard in the palm of his left, brows drawn, eyes down.

"Don't be frightened," he insisted again. "Leaf's all right — as right as — I am. We're both hit."

"What? Oh, please!"

He did not look up. "Do you remember," he said, very low, "my saying, that day going to Denbigh, that you and Leaf and I made a triangle? That the last time it was in my path it meant something in my life, foreboded something?"

"Oh, yes! I remember very well."

Suddenly his face flamed. "One thing that it foreboded, this time, I've tried to tell you — make you feel — but you won't let yourself know it. And now this other thing — this horror — puts a finish on your — ever caring — if you were ever going to. I realize all that."

She winced. "Trouble would n't — cut out — the other thing — caring — if it were right."

He started up and went to the window, looking out a moment at those calm stars through the new leaves. Then he came back and stood before her, looking down into the pale, puzzled face she lifted at last.

"This — horror — is worse than trouble, a long sight," he said quickly. He would get it over and then run from her sweetness! "It's like a risen ghost — about my father. He was a coward. Leaf's mother, Miss Penrose, died the other night at the hospital and she — "

"Miss Penrose! Leaf's mother!" she gasped.

"Leaf's mother," he repeated. "And at the end — she told Sebastian." And while he was saying it, he was forgetting it, in watching the changes in her face, delicate as cloud reflections on water: pallor, palest rose, widening eyes, a shine like tears, then a blush that scorched.

"And Mr. Leaf is — ?" she whispered and stopped.

"My brother. That's the kind of father I had!"

He drained the cup. He dropped into the chair at the desk and hid his face in his arms.

In through the window floated the stroke of half-past nine. It was going to rain with the wind that way. Across the hall Mrs. Pretty's door slammed after a shrill, "I'll be all right! Don't wait up for me, mommer!" from Annamae. Then quick footsteps running downstairs.

Georgia unclenched her hands from over her heart and opened her close-shut eyes. The blow was over. "I'm so glad he's — *your* brother," she began. Then with a long breath and a sound like a smile in her voice, "So — very — glad!" And presently Craig felt a light touch on his hair, still bowed as he was. "And now," she was saying, — "now you and I can understand each other — vastly better. Now you can understand my position — since we both have — so little to believe in."

He looked up palely. "Don't, for God's sake, say that. Not while I have you — to believe in. You are not going to object to my at least believing

in you—out of all the world? You are not too uncompromising for that?"

"Too uncompromising! I could n't endure it if you — did n't believe in me."

"But then we are not quits," he said bitterly, starting up. "Then we are not quits. You don't believe in me. How can you?"

She drew back with a little nervous laugh. "Oh, dear! I don't know — now — what I do or do — "

But she did not finish. And she let happen what was going to happen. Oh, she was so tired being uncompromising, fighting always against things!

He had caught her hands in one of his strong hands, so skillful in cutting, and with the other he had tilted her face close, close to his, his eyes on her lips.

"Sweetheart — little girl next door," he was murmuring, "what's the use — if you don't believe in me! You've kept me good — up to now. Now — what's the use?" And then he kissed her — her — on those scornful lips of hers — those lips that had called a kiss the seal of the slave — and then he went out, not looking back, fumbling for his hat in the little hallway, for the latch of the door.

On the desk where his head had rested, Georgia hid her flaming face. After the slam of the door, the sound of his footsteps, there were only her quick heart-beats close in her throat; then, after a century or two, a clock out in the night striking ten. Sickeningly came back the memory of Judge Craig handing roses across the fence to her mother. False, false —

every man of them! And women their playthings, their slaves! And now she herself signed and sealed like a slave — branded! And she had not resisted, had not fought him away! Her heart-beats grew faster. Had she — for one small, eternal minute — kissed back?

She sprang to her feet and leaned out into the cool night. There was a little breeze in the tree-tops close to the window. Through the tree-tops a blur of roofs in light and shadow. A faint smell of wet asphalt and some one's wood fire and fields of clover beyond town. Beyond town! Leaf beyond town! A poignant thought cut into her abasement. Leaf's mother — Miss Penrose! And only last Sunday — was it only last Sunday! — she had promised Miss Penrose to come again soon and bring spring samples and talk about the fashions! And now she was Mr. Leaf's mother — and she was going away — perhaps had already gone away — and with not one little womanish thing tucked close to her pillow — not one, except what Sebastian, out of her meager nun's possessions, had thought to put there. Trust Sebastian — God bless her! — for doing the tenderest she could! But she — Mr. Leaf's friend — she must do some tender thing for his mother, if it were not too late.

She turned from the dark into the light of her little bedroom and began to rummage for that little white lace scarf of her mother's — the one they had bought together in Venice that unforgettable year.



Perhaps, to-morrow morning, before school, it would not be too late. And she would be keeping her promise to come about the fashions. Fashions! What a strange fashion life had of clothing her, Georgia Frame, with bitterness, and yet leaving her no vesture against the cold wind of hideous fact. And now this final blasting flash! After this there was no heart left in her for her to doubt herself with. In Howard Craig, in him who had given her that exquisite mistrust, who had kept her blood running warm in spite of her — in him, too, the blight! And now on her the brand of the slave! But signed and sealed away from him now as finally and fatally as a nun behind her vows. And left to her, with no heart in her to love with, to fight against — Leaf, pure, clean, strong, true, asking nothing of her that her spirit could not give, worshiping her — his first woman, because of the great sweep of her wings! Leaf was left to her — Leaf, cheated out of his birth-right, left to her who knew all men false.

Then into the mass of gay ribbons and feathers and flowers in that bonnet box in her mother's old trunk, there suddenly fell heavy, hot tears. But — she had kissed back — and she was glad!

Oh, women, women! After all is said and done, is the Great Question the Woman Question? Is it not, rather, ten thousandfold, Man's?

The next day, a day in early June, Craig and Leaf rode past the gristmill, into the meadow road among



clumps of laurel too pink for any earthly snow; then into the wood road edged with young fern broidered with the blue-white of quaker-ladies and the modest crimson of wild strawberries. Back in the woods, on each side of the road, the laurel was like snow.

Craig leaned out of the window of the lumbering country hack next the hearse, and looked up into the delicate intricacy of young birch and oak and maple leaves, and finely tasseling juniper, intervaled with blue sky.

"They're like you, brother," he said. "I was right that day."

"I'm of their kind — wild, a chance growth. I'll stick to their name. It's good enough for me."

"It's clean, at least," Craig said bitterly.

"And it's free. This is the very place I took you in that day. I know it by that crooked birch — little fellow then — crooked like me."

"My God! But it was cruel — all the chance mine — all these years — you struggling!"

They were turning off the wood road into the fields again. Ahead of them the sagging wooden gate of a little stone-walled cemetery stood wide open, sentineled by two tall black cedars, sharp against the sky.

Leaf drew a long breath. "I can't say what I want to say," he began huskily. "I've thought it all out. You won't misunderstand. You are n't the kind — to misunderstand anything. We're

---

brothers all right — better still, friends — all solid. But I'm just — her child, just Leaf. And there's nothing — nothing coming to me — ever — from him. That's dead sure. I'm not bitter. Lord, no! But when a man's always — gone it alone — clean — ”

The carriage slowed up in the long grass. A meadowlark darted from behind the stone wall singing and soaring. ”

## CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH THERE IS A LOGICAL BABY AT A CHEERFUL EXPERIMENT STATION, WHERE SOME PROBLEMS ARE ALMOST SOLVED

THANKS be to the immortal gods, Tragedy's sable train is often trippingly borne by smiling Comedy!

But far from classic was Theodosia's mood the morning after the girls' dancing-class at the Boys' Club, and after she had found Georgia crying her heart out in a hat box of feathers and flowers that smelt of mothballs, in her mother's old trunk, a Saratoga as big as a house, with the big initials "L. D. F." And then, after drying her eyes and making Theodosia an eggnog, Georgia had sat up half the night, reading those old letters out of the middle drawer of her desk. Greatest mistake in the world to keep old letters! Such a bore when people were dead, and such a problem, if one had n't good sense and a coal range in the kitchen or an open fire somewhere about the house! But as far as that goes, Theodosia herself had n't slept a bit well. Her ankles had actually ached from dancing every dance and all the extras, and her mind had ached from a vain effort to think out just what men really do mean. The first thing Feminists ought to do is to find that out definitely and reduce it to outline form, and then see the way to stopping it. Six of

---

the dances had been with Mr. Wedgwood, each preceded by a perfectly inane struggle between feminine logic and masculine prejudice. Immovable, gigantic, monumental prejudice! And Mrs. Webb excused him for being prejudiced by saying that his sisters had never filled the lamps. Why should they? Such men as Mr. Wedgwood were the very starting-point of sex antagonism, the very cement of sex solidarity! He could n't argue, could n't even see a perfectly sharpened point, much less keep it in sight. And yet he maintained the anatomical similarity of the brain of the sexes. And then, in the very next breath, just as they had begun the sixth of their dances, he had declared flippantly that he fully agreed with Emerson, that "Civilization is the work of good women," and that he thought women were rapidly sloughing off the characteristics of the slave and men were putting them on. How could any one get anywhere with Mr. Wedgwood!

After such a night, Theodosia was in no way prepared for the disgusting news that greeted her at Jenkins and Bartlett's, where she had gone to begin her equal wage investigation for the College Equal Suffrage League. The news was conveyed to her, not pleasantly, at the Notions, by the severe and scornful shoplady who had just completed her thirtieth year with the firm and wore pink complexion powder. She had coldly disdained all Theodosia's efforts toward friendliness and had no tolerance for Kathleen's honeyed glances.

This morning there was no Kathleen turning over tape and hairpins and handing out jollies. But Theodosia valiantly and smilingly held out a sprig of lilac to the scornful one.

"Thanks, no! Never wear flowers during business. And your friend Miss Mooney? Ain't you heard?"

"Heard? What? Not ill, I hope!"

"I don't know whether you'd call it ill—getting smashed up—joy-riding. Papers are full of it this morning." The scornful lady was airily flirting a small feather duster over the celluloid thimbles and the hooks and eyes. "But sick, rather, don't you think?"

"Who with?" ungrammatically from Theodosia, fumbling the disdained sprig into her own belt. "Poor fool! Some disgusting man, I suppose!"

"Something they *call* a man! Plain's day 't was coming some time. Why, with our Mr. Sibley, department manager, of course. Been making a dead set at him ever since she came. All the girls know that. And between whiles talking about Woman Suffrage! Lands! It's a funny world! Collar boning, you said? Black or white? These wires are the very newest." And she left Theodosia collapsed mentally over the white celluloid toilet articles, and snipped off a yard of fine crimped wires to uphold the neck trimming of lovely woman. Then, coming back, bending over her book of purchase slips, she fired one more shot. "And your other friend, her running-mate, — that nice little mill girl, — Anna-

mae Something," — pausing to chew a finer point on her pencil, — "she's in it, too, the girls are saying. And another feller. Land! It's an awful funny world! And such as *them* voting! Not for me!"

After this it was all that Theodosia could do to crawl round the corner to the linen counter, where the shopgirls were men. Men did n't jeer and did n't gossip, bad as they were. And the man who came forward not too hurriedly when she sank on the stool by the towels was nice and middle-aged and fatherly. Fatherly looking men are n't half so aggressive. After all, the fatherly is just the maternal in them, just called by another derivative! Women have taught men how to be paternal. Before women enlightened them, they were just brutes, and cared no more for their offspring than tom cats do for kittens.

Such was Theodosia's mood as the fatherly salesman approached and asked her whether she had seen their bargains in real huckaback. Huckaback! As a little girl, long ago, she had ridden on Uncle Elam's shoulders "huck-a-back." What could the man mean? But whatever he might mean, she had n't seen the bargains, and she said so as calmly as that disgusting performance of Kathleen's would permit.

But just at that very moment, a quite unpaternal voice broke into her confusion, saying, farther up the counter, behind a pile of Lonsdale sheeting at twelve and a half cents a yard, "I want to get a lot



of bath-towels — good strong ones — nothing fancy, you know. For the Boys' Club. Been putting in showers. Any reduction for us?"

Theodosia, listening, realizing, bent over the huckaback towels, fingering them knowingly. "Oh, I see!" she said. "Nice, are n't they! And real bargains — at that price." Of course, now, she remembered. The other was "pick-a-back." And what under the sun brought Mr. Wedgwood there, just at that time of all times, when she would like to see all men swept off the face of the globe — brutes, leading Kathleen and Annamae into such hideous slavery! — perhaps killing them! She had never thought to ask that odious old maid at the notion counter whether they were killed. But now, of course, she would have to buy some towels. How could she ever get out of it? And then she could ask her questions about wages when Mr. Wedgwood had bought his bath-towels and gone his way.

But by the time the huckaback bargains were bought and paid for, and ordered sent, Mr. Wedgwood had just finished his deal in bath-towels, and, seemingly well satisfied with his reduction, sauntered Theodosiaward. In the left-hand pocket of his blue coat bulged the morning paper with its joy-ride headlines. Over the Lonsdale sheeting at twelve and a half cents he had thrillingly glimpsed a spring hat already familiar — pert Black-eyed Susans on a rough brown straw. Even in her hat-trimmings she was a Feminist!✓

"Oh!" he said, at once growing honest, "I thought I'd find you. Miss Frame said so. And I'm going your way."

"No, you're not!" she answered, not so rudely as it sounds. "I have n't — any — way. What did Georgia mean? How did you see her?" She had collapsed again on the stool and the paternal man had retired behind the sheeting.

"Shake hands, anyhow," he went on quietly. "I insist that I'm going your way, because I have n't any way, either."

"But that's absolutely illogical. How can you be going my way when I have n't any? Like saying you'd eat my apple when I have n't any apple. Don't let's argue here, for goodness' sake." Somehow, this was the last straw, after that hideous news about Kathleen and Annamae. "I'm going."

"Then you have a way. And may I go, too? They are jolly obliging about my bath-towels."

There was nothing to say, of course, and it was dangerous, anyhow, to try to say it with tears ready to brim. And of all catastrophes nothing could be more horridly humiliating than crying — crying before a man — crying before Mr. Wedgwood! She did n't even look at him as he whirled the turnstile door for her and then fell into her step on the crowded, sunny pavement.

"How in the world did you see Georgia?" she began crossly, as they went up Lime Street, looking unseeingly at the corsets on the wax ladies in

Jenkins and Bartlett's corner window. Whose way was it — Lime Street — his or hers? "And what did she ever tell you that for?"

"Oh, I did n't see her. I did n't say I'd seen her. I just said that she had said."

"Then, logically you must have spoken with her, and if you spoke with her you must have —"

"Not necessarily — in this age. There's the telephone." And he spoke casually and took off his hat to a young man in a white linen overcoat driving a butcher's wagon. One of Mr. Wedgwood's greatest object-lessons was taking off his hat. Taking off the hat is becoming a vanishing art and Mr. Wedgwood regarded its symbolism as profoundly vital in social service. Nowadays only idle people and swells and softies take off their hats. This was not Mr. Wedgwood's theory.

However, when he looked away from the butcher's wagon to see that it was not running over Theodosia, as they crossed Lime and Derby streets, over toward the little park that the aldermen were squabbling over because it was n't a playground,— at that moment he forgot all about theory. Theodosia's freckles were quite lost in a flood of color and there were tears — yes, tears — on her cheeks, and she was poking into her trim little brown jacket wildly, into its blouse and its jaunty pockets. Where *was* that handkerchief?

Mr. Wedgwood held out a snowy, unfolded square of linen bearing a handsome "W." An old

---

co-ed friend of Oberlin days had worked him six for Christmas. Poor co-ed!

"There's a nice bench," he said gently. "You're all tired out. Let's sit in the shade there a minute and get things straightened. That baby won't mind us, on the grass there. He's quite a baby."

And then — after they had got settled, and the baby had toddled bow-leggedly up to the shine of Mr. Wedgwood's watch, and Theodosia had wiped the tears off her nose and wondered what under the sun to do with that handkerchief, whether to return it stained with her tears or — he went on, very quietly, as if it were all a matter of everyday occurrence, lending his handkerchief to a weeping Feminist —

"I want that handkerchief, please, — just as it is. And I'll be honest. You see, I saw in the —"

At this moment, Theodosia laughed a little wildly. "The baby needs it," she said. "May I? I hate babies. But see that little trickle!"

"All babies do that. Poor little chap! But not with this handkerchief — consecrated with Feminist tears! And anyhow, there's his mother. See him toddle."

"Feminist tears! Dust in my eyes. But is n't the mother a sight! Do see her frowzy hair. Does n't she prove, right away, without another word, the need of social motherhood!"

"She proves that babies don't favor it," he laughed, as they watched the little bow-legs under

the ragged blue jacket toddle over to the frowzy woman and the policeman. "Behold the hug he's giving her. That's proof enough for you. And she is n't so bad-looking now."

"Oh, you're a sentimentalist, dated Dark Ages. And I suppose you have a Madonna hanging over your desk."

"I'm just plain human. But as I was saying, I saw in the paper about the mess your friends have got themselves into —"

"Have been got into, you mean."

"Have been got into," he went on carefully; "and I knew how you'd feel — and — I knew mighty well how I felt — because you — would feel — badly." It was very pleasant to see him getting confused, nice and red above his collar. "And so I telephoned Miss Frame."

"In school! In her class!"

"Simplest matter in the world. She answered at once — probably has a connection on her desk. And she said she had heard already — that Mrs. Pretty, almost in hysterics, had come back from the hospital, after you went out, to get some things for Annamae. And she also said she was glad I was going to find you — that you were in some store making wage investigations. So I began at the biggest."

"And how bad is it? Are they killed or hurt or — what? Brutes!"

"The brutes are bruised — no bones broken. Want to see the paper?"



"Oh, dear, no! Hearing's bad enough."

"And Annamae had a fractured leg and a strained back, and Kathleen — she was on the front seat with that Sibley — has bad cuts on her face and neck,— from the glass, you know,— and some broken ribs. It's a bad mess."

The bow-legged baby was toddling back over the grass, pausing to pick a squatty dandelion and rub it against his nose. The mother had found another mother, with a smaller baby in a perambulator, to gossip with, and had seated herself on a bench. Wagons and automobiles filled the sunny street that bounded the little green park, and eleven struck cheerily up among the pigeons whirling around the City Hall tower. A sunbeam found its way through the young maple leaves to the back of Mr. Wedgwood's brown neck, fresh and clean-shaven, as he leaned forward watching the baby. His shoulders were nice and broad, even if he could n't follow an argument. Theodosia scowled at the baby. He no longer needed Mr. Wedgwood's handkerchief.

"Somehow — to-day — everything seems dreadfully wrong. Georgia was all out of sorts, too. I guess I'm tired. I'm going home to read Rosa Mayreder and the 'Forerunner,' and get braced for real work."

"Oh, stop a moment and — live," he said, taking the offered dandelion and returning the baby's rollicking display of four white teeth in the most engaging of smiles. "Stop a minute and — love a few — things."



He was talking foolishly to that baby, his finger under the chubby chin as he smiled back into the china-blue eyes. And the baby was vastly amused at his behavior.

"How can he!" Theodosia exclaimed crossly. "He's merely a nice little animal. Our Peter is less troublesome and less tyrannical."

Mr. Wedgwood let go the baby's chin and looked round at her quite deliberately. "I meant you," he said. "Stop a minute and — love a few things."

There was a silence. The baby was off on another flower hunt. Suddenly a wave of recklessness swept well into Theodosia's harbor defenses. That joy-ride had utterly unnerved her.

"What — for instance?" — freckles all drowned in a flood of color.

"What — for instance? Why — me, if there's nothing better." He had taken off his glasses. His eyes were quite interesting.

But Theodosia rallied. "I suppose you think a woman's got to — love something."

"I do, emphatically — to be an all-round woman."

"Perfect stuff! Like Annamae and Kathleen, I suppose."

"To understand — Annamae and Kathleen."

Another silence.

Then, Theodosia, wearily, "Oh, dear! I can't argue with you. I'm sick of understanding things." And again there seemed need of the co-ed's Christ-

mas handkerchief. Why did n't he stick to his point and not get into an argument!

As if reading her thought, he made a wide sweep round again to his point, the look in his eyes even more interesting, his arm on the back of the green bench.

"Stop trying to understand. Concentrate on — trying to — love — me!"

Another wave — a wild one — over the harbor defenses! "I would n't do it — if I had to try." He was thrillingly disturbing. But what fun!

There was that baby intruding again, breaking into the conversation with his foolish dandelions.

"Then don't try," Mr. Wedgwood was saying, unnecessarily low, considering the clatter of the streets and the chirping of the sparrows and the tender years of the baby. "Stop trying. Let yourself go and — love me."

Theodosia made a hole in the gravel with the heel of her trim shoe. "Everything's so disappointing, and Georgia's so blue about something — her love-affairs, I suppose — I might as well have my little — experiment," she finished breathlessly.

Then three things happened simultaneously and spoiled a situation. Just as Mr. Wedgwood caught at her hand, the baby toddled close to her knee, and on the other side of the park, directly at the opposite end of the walk by which they sat, there appeared Mrs. Lillie Watkins Webb and her secretary, Miss Royce.

“Oh, is n’t that the last straw!” Theodosia cried under her breath. “Now what shall we do!”

But she seemed at no loss as to her part in saving the situation; for she leaned forward and took baby, dandelion, jacket, and all up into her slim brown tailor-made lap, and grew vastly absorbed. And presently, Mr. Wedgwood was rising and doing his part calmly and valiantly, explaining that he had just met Miss Pell on her Equal Wage investigation, and that he had stopped to tell her about the shocking accident, and then she had insisted on stopping then and there to look into the matter of the need of social motherhood — that the green bench might be considered a sort of experiment station! And then Theodosia was ready with her share of explaining, and displayed the baby as a proof of the vital need of social motherhood. And then, in and out of Mrs. Webb’s and Miss Royce’s well-bred and well-timed questions and exclamations, Mr. Wedgwood put on his glasses again, and thanked Miss Pell for giving him a share in her valuable experiment, and bowed himself off. And then Theodosia — suddenly keyed down to C Major again — put down the baby and found herself going off with Mrs. Webb and Miss Royce, and hearing all the details of the joy-ride.

That afternoon, while Georgia was still at school making out questions for the final exams., Theodosia tried another experiment — soda biscuit for supper. But after all, the cream was n’t sour, it was

just thick. At supper Georgia knew in a minute what the matter was. So they ate crackers and toast. Georgia did n't know, of course, that Ernesto Cittrone had smuggled up a note from the Boys' Club while Theodosia was mixing the biscuit, and that she had sat at least twenty minutes on the kitchen table, realizing the content of the dozen or so perfectly obvious lines signed, "Illogically, but always and wholly yours, J. P. W."

That there had been an occurrence, other than her own, of a sentimental nature, Georgia never dreamed, until, awakened out of her own restless dreams long after midnight, she found Theodosia standing at her bedside.

"Do forgive me for disturbing you," she was saying, "but I simply can't get to sleep, my dear, until I get something straightened out in my mind."

Georgia sat up quickly, facing moonlit sky and city roofs through the wide-open window.

"Are you ill? Has anything else happened? Is Annamae — " she began sleepily.

"Oh, no, no, my dear! Everything's all right. But I'm just puzzling about something. Don't you think, Georgia, that, after all, a woman is better equipped for our work when she's — she's been through every experience? Because, otherwise, how do we know?"

Georgia drew in a quick, deep breath. "Oh, my dear! Is that it? I'm the last person to ask. I'm beginning to see things so differently — now. First,

before we women really do anything — some great leader — somebody — has got to make men see themselves — and be — true. I wish Christ would come back!"

"But if every woman made it her business to keep one man good! There are enough women in the world! I forget the statistics."

Georgia laughed softly, and reaching up, drew Theodosia down by her long braids.

"Oh, you old sweet baby!" she murmured. "I know what you are getting at. You can't help it. And Mr. Wedgwood is a dear!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH THERE IS A SOUNDLESS FIGHT IN THE  
DARK, AND THEN UNSAID THINGS ARE WRITTEN  
IN WATER

THE only sound was the shrill chorus of young frogs, as Mrs. Tibbetts stood at the kitchen door listening. Billy Leaf had been out there long enough, in the lonesome night. A'most midnight now. And ever since he came back from Penrose Mills, at nine o'clock, there he'd been, out there in the gardens. Dr. Craig — good man, if there ever was — had brought him back in his machine, but he would n't come in. He was hurrying on to Mrs. Rush's. And then Billy — my, how white he was, and how tired! — had kissed her and gone to the pump and pumped and pumped, and drained a big dipperful of water, and then come and put his hands on her shoulders, and said, short and dry and quick, "My blood's all right, ma'am. Part of it's Penrose — my mother's — we buried her to-day. The other side's" — and how his thin lips had curled! — "famous — but it's a coward's. Cut that all out — clean. Forget it! I'm just — Leaf." Then, with a quick breath, on into the silence of her amazement, "Saw the old place to-day — clean as a pin — new paint everywhere. One old elm gone, that's all. New orchard. New silo." Then another great



drink at the pump, and out into the night without another look. All that more than two hours ago. And now a'most midnight!

"Billee! Bille-e!" she called under her curved hand, in her tremulous old voice. "Comin' soon?"

And in a minute, above frog chorus, came back clearly, "All right! Coming, ma'am."

For now he had arrived at a point when he could come. Not before could he quit the fight. And not until he had fought it all out could he face life again. No time, even to realize himself, much less to fight, since that afternoon — a lifetime ago, was it? — when Craig had come across those very fields to tell him of his shame, and to call him "brother." His shame! Always he had suspected it, feared it, been ready for it. But not for this Lie. That was the shame of it. That the man who had begotten him had posed as great and good, had let the world honor him, and let a wife believe in him, and teach a son to revere him and grow up in the honor of his name — damn him! There was the shame of it! And down in the woods his sin and his victims! Would to God it had been an ignorant ploughman who had fathered him, and not this rotten "great man"! Would to God there were just hills and streams and woods and skies and dumb things in his blood, and not selfish, treacherous, knowing human things! Would to God — God?

He stopped short in the fight. Facing him as he leaned on the stone wall, the great somber hills lay

against the west. Flying clouds between him and stars. The wind rising off in the woods under the hills. A whippoorwill somewhere in the shadows. The shrill, sweet piping of the frogs. And in the stillness there came to him the memory of her voice that snowy day in the trolley going to Bloomfield — “Does it make much difference, after all, what is just behind us? God’s back of all, you and me. He’s a great ancestor.” That was what she had to say. But was there a God back of us all? Would a God let such Lies be? And yet, if there were not, who kept the world balanced? Why was n’t it all rotten? Why did n’t it tip into hell with its rottenness? If there were a God — if he could be sure of it — why, then God would be on his side against the sins of his father. If there were — But if there were not, how could she be his Vision, how could that good nun be so divinely tender, how could Mrs. Tibbetts be, and little children? Oh, if there were! He looked up at the hills. Was that what they meant and all the beautiful dumb things in the world? Was that why blindfolded Hope, in the picture he loved, kept her hand on the broken harp of life? Was there a chance that this Lie that had begotten him was not the end of it all?

The rough stones in the old wall felt pleasantly cool to his hot head, and reminded him of that minute in the little hospital room when he had put his head softly, softly against his mother’s cold bosom. And then his tired thoughts traveled on to the next

morning in the hospital, when that good nun had brought in a little white lace scarf — just before they started for Penrose Mills — and laid it lightly over that cold bosom. Miss Frame had brought it, she had whispered to him, for his mother to wear. Miss Frame! God bless her! Did she know of — the Lie? Did she know about Craig.

Then the fight was on again. Craig cared a heap. Craig was his brother. It was hers — to choose! *Not* hers to choose! She was not his Love,— never had been,— she was his Vision. Craig could have her, would have her,— damn him, he had had everything — Now, even the stones under his burning forehead were not cool — Of course, Craig should have her — in his splendid home — and in the future there would be children and — and — Of course it was right. Had n't he told Craig that nothing — nothing was ever — coming to him — from *him*? She was from — from his direction — And *his* son cared a *heap*! What mattered Leaf's caring? He was n't in the race — he with the Lie to stagger under. And nothing could take away his Vision. Had n't she said so — consented, looked it into his eyes? Was n't that look enough for eternity? Then he remembered, like a keen knife-thrust, the soft white curve of her throat that night in the firelight when she had sung with the Denbigh boys. My God! Reach down and help! It was then, when the fight was hottest, that Mrs. Tibbetts's old voice quavered out to him. He started up. It was like

God answering. And then, quite irrelevantly to his superconsciousness, out of some quiet depth of his subconscious self, he remembered an unfinished sentence — "To strive, to seek, to find — and not to yield." Where had he picked that up, anyhow? The battle-cry had rung. The fight was over.

"Bil-le-e! Comin'?" quavered again through the stillness.

"All right! Coming, ma'am!" he called back.

And presently, as he went, feeling for the first time the heaviness of his weary body after the long sleeplessness and the fight that followed, there came out to meet him the heavenly smell of fresh coffee, and Jock's nose went into his hand, and then Mrs. Tibbetts stood in the lighted doorway. Not God, in home-comings, when battles are o'er!

"Land sakes, Billy Leaf! Ef you don't take an ague that'll shake every tooth out of your head! Coffee'll drive it off, ef anything can. An' such a time as them hens has been a-givin' me, tryin' to set. But Riley an' Smith's been good about duckin' 'em an' drivin' 'em off. Now you set right down and fall to eatin'. Don't waste no time talkin'."

And Leaf ate and drank, and shared with Jock pressed against his knee, and Mrs. Tibbetts rocked and talked on in snatches about chickens and flowers and vegetables and Jock and the cats, and other dumb, cheerful things. When he got up to go to bed, she drew him over to the window, pointing out into the night.

"That light ain't been out for two nights. The little boy is mighty sick, and been missing the doctor. And his mother! Land, Billy! Talk about your God of battles! It's the God of mothers I say my prayers to."

"I guess you're about right, ma'am," he said, his arm going round her. "In the morning early we'll go over and do what we can!"

Upstairs, ten minutes afterwards, despite the two cups of coffee, he dropped into a heavy sleep. And some time during the sleep, in some strange psychological second, he dreamed that the blindfolded girl in the picture took off her blindfold — and smiled out of joyous young eyes — and it was his mother. And then, presently — he heard its sweetness quite distinctly — she struck the silver string of the broken harp.

But Fate had not quite finished with him. She had to test the mettle of him, try the steel.

Two days afterward, he came face to face with Georgia Frame as she got off the trolley at Russet Center, headed for Linda Rush's. He had just sent to town three hundred roses, and one hundred pink stocks, and one hundred lemon snapdragons, and one hundred blue Canterbury bells. There was a big wedding on the Boulevard that night — a rainbow wedding, the papers said.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Mr. Leaf! I'm so very glad!" And she went as white as any bride. And all the



time she was thinking — "Poor boy! Poor, poor boy! How he's been hurt! But he must n't see the least bit that I see."

Leaf bit into his under lip, and sprang out of the machine. He recognized his moment: "I'm so very glad," he echoed. "It's been ten thousand years — first woman."

She laughed, and the color swept back into her cheeks. "I guess you've been as busy as I have," she said gayly. "Only yours is pleasanter business. Flowers don't have to be examined and kept in."

He pushed back the rampant cowlick with the familiar gesture. "It's not snowing," he said, with a little smile, "but the roads are good. Will you go?" And he was saying to himself, "One day I'll have of her — before his turn comes. One day — and then a lifetime."

"Anywhere," she said, lightly, and yet to him how profoundly! "I'm just ready for a happy time."

"So am I," he said, as she sprang in. "Shall we make for the hills?"

They were whirling off past the prim old houses of the Center. What did those old houses know about the great Lie in the world and the Man Question? Dozens of good women had looked at life through the small wavy glasses of their old-fashioned windows.

"Glorious! For the hills," she echoed. And then she took off her hat and settled herself joyously. "If this is n't too good to be true!"



"It is true, though," he said, with strange seriousness.

She must be prepared for strange new depths in his talk, she was thinking. It was like riding over a road that had been tunneled below, and hearing the depths.

"I have something to give you," he was going on; "something to put into your life that nothing can take out."

"What can it be? Not an abandoned farm, perhaps?"

"Something writ in water," he laughed. "It sounds mysterious, does n't it? It will stay always and yet it is writ in water."

"It sounds like an old-time riddle. What is it that is writ in water and yet that will always remain?"

"In your heart, you must add. You could never guess. It's a brook that I know. I'm going to put a brook into your heart. Have you ever followed one?"

"Never! What an enchanting thing to do! And then you can follow it whenever you want in your heart, can't you, for refreshment?"

"It's always there, and it's always in summer-time, or in spring-time, or whenever you want it to be."

Now they were quite away from the prim old houses of the Center, flying along a sandy brown road that led to the hills. Back in the woods the

laurel was like snow, out in the sunnier places too pink for any earthly snow.

"There's cress in the brook, lots of it, and I have a loaf of bread there under the seat," he was saying. "Mrs. Tibbetts told me especially to buy bread." And his laugh rang out gayly. "There's no banquet to be compared with bread and cress and brook water."

The wind of their flying blew her hair into all kinds of delightful rings and strings around her face. Her gloves, too, she had taken off, and turned back the long severe sleeves halfway to her elbows. How white and fine her wrists were, with their faint blue veinings! And how gay her mouth as she echoed, "Bread and cress and brook water!" And then, leaning toward him, she said, "And when we are following the brook, will you tell me all about the wonderful times you have had with Nature? About when you were growing up and learning all the beautiful secrets we poor things never can know?"

They curved off noiselessly into a grassy wood road, young fern in last winter's ruts. But he looked at her steadily out of his melancholy eyes.

"I would tell you the very deepest secrets of my soul, first woman," he said.

"I'd keep them, too," she answered, a little fearfully. Somehow to-day she could not look so calmly into his eyes. They were no longer the eyes of a faun. And he must not, must not tell her the terrible secret that she already knew. One hearing had

been agony enough. "You've read about the fauns in olden times and their close intimacy with Nature. That's what I mean about you and the secrets you know."

"I've often wished I had been a faun," he said slowly. "I used to read about them in an old Bullfinch on the teacher's desk when I went to light the school fire winter mornings, and sweep out. I was a faun — till Craig — stung me." A slow flush began to burn.

"Stung you?" she repeated low and vaguely.

"Into realizing things. Stung my pride and roused me into wanting an education." He was slowing up in a tangle of birch and balsam, under a ragged, overhanging ledge of fern-crannied rock. He sprang out and held out his hand for her. "But except for one thing, I would to God I'd stayed faun."

She lighted airily on the thick green moss. "Oh! oh! I'd love to be one, too," she cried, with a long breath of delight, — "and live here — and not care."

Overhead there were the green interlacings of thick boughs; around them airy green walls delicately pillared with slender white birches; behind them, in the fern and the gray ledges of granite, the soft splash of a young brook.

He held the one hand that she had given him as she sprang out. He caught the other and stretched wide her arms, and looked down into her face. "The one thing — you — first woman," he said, lower, more uncertainly, than the brook in the fern. "Be-

cause a faun cannot know what it is to" — the pressure of his hands hurt hers: he bit hard into his thin under lip — "to strive, to seek, to find — and not to yield." And the smile in his eyes was as faint and wavering as that ray of sunshine in the leaves over his head. "So I am glad — I'm not a faun," he finished, drawing a quick breath, and letting go her hands.

"Oh, so am I!" she cried, so gay in her relief and so wild in her pain at his pain that her voice had tears in it. "If you were you would much prefer a herd of shaggy goats to a woman for companionship. And you could never drive an automobile. No one would ever give a faun a license."

"That's true," he said, steadily again. "And now here's the thing written in water — to be copied in your heart. See it? Hear it up there, — first a trickle through moss, then several trickles, and a splash down to the next ledge. In my faun days I knew all the brooks in the hills. The trout were n't afraid of me. It's fun to lie flat, nose to water, and watch."

"Secret number one. The trout were n't afraid. I'll never breathe it." Thank God he was serene again! She could smile quite fearlessly into his eyes, as they followed the slender thread of water from under the rocks into its pebbly channel worn in and out among birch and juniper and balsam. But, poor boy, poor boy! And now this other hurt! This hurt through her! Ought she not to be life's

atonement to him? Her spirit was his for the asking, and in flying she could lift him, too. It was the supreme right of the free woman to choose as her spirit found its mate, not as her heart enslaved her. And he — the victim of Man's tyranny, Man's treachery — was he not of all men her spirit's choice, to be her protest to the world against the mockeries she loathed?

! She on one side of the brook, looking across to him, laughing with him, stooping to pick the close, childlike white violets beginning to enamel the margin, and pondering her fate and his fate, with that blithe line curving the corners of her mouth! He on the other side, paler than a woodsman should be, bareheaded, cowlick rampant, the loaf of bread under his arm, feeling his heart drop back into its regular beating, hearing still the echo of — "And — not — to — yield." He had not yielded.

"Brooks are n't lonesome, you see, like the clouds," he was going on, handing across a bluebird's feather. "That shows who's been here for a drink, does n't it? Between times, ploughing in the old days, I used to run down to the brook for company, then back to work again. Just a boy in a big field was lonesome."

"And now how it's changing," she cried, as they came out into a wide marshy field, where late cowslips glowed here and there among the grassy tussocks. "And it's meeting other brooks, is n't it?"

"This way, or you'll get wet!" And again he took her hand as she sprang to safety with a laugh.



But no lingering of touch! "And — not — to — yield" his heart was beating. "And all the other brooks are having something to say, about where they've come from and what they've brought. And then they quiet down, over there in the edge of the woods, and mingle and — " He paused. "And — not — to — yield," said the echo. "And soon forget-me-nots are plentiful," he finished cheerfully; "and below them, the other side of that woods, in the pasture, there are cows and watercress."

"Oh, happy thought!" she cried. "And the banquet!"

And then, presently, they were in the woods again, and the brook had set them a goodly distance apart, with its brown depths shot with sunlight and now and then a swift shadow that made Leaf whisper, "Trout!" and its wild white cascades, and then its shallows still blue with forget-me-nots. Leaf pulled a great bunch, his face reflected looking at hers in the water as they laughed. And then on out into the pasture dotted with pink laurel bushes and browsing red and brown and spotted cows, and Leaf into the purling shallows for cress, and bearing dripping handfuls up the hillside to the banquet hall under low-sweeping pines. Oh, weather and hour and place for happy lovers, and yet — "And — not — to — yield!" And after the banquet, to drink as the red cow was drinking lower down, nose to water, she on her side, he on his, flat on the grassy margin.



"But you are a faun, still," she whispered across the water to his reflection.

"Ssh!" he whispered back. "Look in and watch and listen." And she could hear the red cow drinking lower down, and a swallow skimmed close and shadowed the water, and a school of tiny minnows danced in a sunny spot.

And he could see her face in the water, copying it into his heart — flushed olive cheeks, lashes down, the blithe mouth, and above the face, rings and strings of blowing hair, a strip of delicately sun-flushed neck, then slender lines and curves stretched on the sunny close-cropped bank. The red cow would crop that sweet grass, perhaps, for her supper. Oh, suns and skies and clouds of June! And yet there was the Lie in the world, and she was fighting against it, she and other good women! Thank God, she did n't know he was — what he was made to be!

And she was thinking into the brook, her heart close to the sod with its ache for him, "Oh, poor, poor boy! I think I know now — a little — how Linda feels for Joy! I wish I were old and wise and I could be tender to you and touch your thin cheek and take care of you. Oh, dear! It must be the mother feeling that makes my heart ache for you. And if again — you should look at me — as you did in the woods — who knows! Being sorry is such a pain."

But not again did he look at her as he had looked in the woods. Instead, when she had sprung across

to him from stone to stone, and seated herself breathless under the pines once more, he came up and flung himself down on the brown needles and looked a long time up at the sky with its great fluffs of slow-moving cloud. She leaned her head against the trunk and closed her eyes and grew aware of the afternoon silence that poets call golden.

Suddenly he turned to her, resting his head in his hand as he leaned on his elbow. "After this," he went on, as if there had been no break in their talk, "the brook is not so friendly. It grows into a big stream, and then it is entrapped by the waterworks system, and is run into dark pipes underground and up into houses — where there are — people."

"Not nice to think of! It's tragic, when all brooks are bound for the sea."

He looked up quickly. "I never thought before — of that," he said. "They're bound for the sea. And the sea is there, unchanging, no matter what happens to them. The sea — expects them, and the sea starts them in the beginning, in those big clouds up there. But their lives, their channels, are their own, and man's. Like life, is n't it?"

"Exactly. And the sea is God, you mean?"

"Is it, to you?"

"Surely."

"Then to me it is — surely." And he looked up at the sky again, remembering that other sea that had seemed to surround his life — "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea." And she called it God!

When the big cloud like a full-rigged schooner had sailed round behind the woods, he began again, his first words flying color in her cheeks. "Craig is a wonder," he said suddenly, his eyes on the red cow just below cropping closer and closer to that sweet spot by the brook. "Unspoiled. Loyal. Fine. True! And — tender. I've — seen things."

She laughed and gathered up a handful of powdery needles. "He thinks all that — of you," she said. "He can read people."

He sprang to his feet. "Lord! Time is n't standing still, is it? See those long shadows over on the hillside."

"And are we to follow back?" she said readily. "And start from that sweet shimmery green place where the brook starts."

"No," he said. "You are to rest here — first woman — and think your white thoughts. Then this place you — will give me — to remember."

"As you have given me the brook?"

"As I have given you the brook. And you need n't be the least afraid. There's a farmhouse just behind the trees. Nice people. And the machine is n't ten minutes away by straight road — a mile and a half by brook windings."

And while he was gone she lay back on the warm needles and looked up at his clouds and thought white thoughts of him and of what he was too brave to say to her, and of what he had been brave enough to say to her of Craig. And then she wondered

what under the sun she could do with this new heartache for him that she had now to bear with all the other heartaches. And she leaned her cheek close to the warm earth and wished herself a dryad instead of a Feminist with theories that recognized no homely, old-fashioned sentiments, and that were supposed to withstand all spiritual shocks.

But her wish was unanswered, and she looked only a somewhat drowsy, disheveled young woman when she was again at his side in the machine, and they were flying along toward Russet Center. He seemed to have gathered new quiet and strength, during those ten minutes when he had gone back into the heart of the woods, and as they bowled along he was telling her of Riley's fine qualities and of how nearly ready he was for the Agricultural College, and of Smith's deftness with machinery — marvels of convenience the arrangements he had put up in the kitchen to save Mrs. Tibbetts's steps, and the hose connections he had made in the greenhouses; and of the cleverness in school of the two other boys from Miss Jessup's in Denbigh. And they were all going on an excursion to the Sound some time during the summer. He wanted to throw them into salt water and see them swim. Corking good boys, all of them!

Nearing the Center, he slowed up for Georgia to put on her hat and to discuss the time and the question of going back to town or going to Linda's. That morning, little Joy had been better, no convulsion

during the whole night. Leaf and Mrs. Tibbetts had been over to see. And when they got to the Center, there were Carl and Jack and Corilla and Adelaide having college ices in the drug store. All that was encouraging. Besides — and her eyes met Leaf's for a flash — after such a day — after getting a brook written into her heart, she could n't go anywhere but home. How could she! Home was the only place after getting a brook written into your heart. Quiet was needed to let it dry, she said, with a little laugh.

And Leaf agreed with her, and hailed the trolley, and drove so close that she could just step aboard. But he did n't look back after that last slow lift of his cap over cowlick rampant. How could he, when he was hearing new words to the loud heart-beats strumming in his ears! "Writ in water! Writ in water!" said his heart to him. So he did not look back at Georgia on the end seat of the car, ready to wave to him. In another moment he had whirled his Ford round the corner out of sight.



## CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH SEBASTIAN SAYS LUMINOUS THINGS THAT  
MAKE A GREAT SHINING IN A DARK PLACE, AND  
JUST A WOMAN SETTLES THE QUESTION

SEBASTIAN took her out into the brick-paved yard, to a bench by the wall under the boughs of a big sugar maple bordering the sidewalk outside. The sidewalk trees did their best for the nuns' recreation yard. It was nearly noon. And it was just a week after the Day of the Brook and the Great Unsaid! All the week there had been good news from little Joy, and in high school there had been final exams. There had been no time for teachers to look into their own hearts and ask them searching questions, with that mad scramble for Harvard and Yale and Princeton and Tech. and Cornell and Smith and Vassar and Wellesley — and Bryn Mawr — oh, those horrid English finals! — keeping blue pencils going and nerves on edge. But Georgia had been aware of her two-edged heartache all the time, even when she was reading that Milton's amiable daughters wrote out the whole of "Paradise Lost" on their type-writers, and that the Caroline Poets were so called because they were Suffragists.

And finally, exams. over, flunks consoled, and victors congratulated, she took her heartache over to see if Sebastian could cure it. But no word of it



did she tell Sebastian, not a word even of what Craig had told and Leaf had not told.

Sebastian kissed her on the cheeks in a real nunny fashion. Then she put her arm round her waist in a motherly fashion, and led her out through the corridors that smelt faintly of ether — such a busy time in the operating-room — into the sunny yard.

“That is Abraham, there on top of the wall, with two other of the patriarchs,” Sebastian said. “The Sisters have ruined their digestions. Do you mind cats, dear?” The shady bench was right under the dozing patriarchs.

Georgia did n’t mind cats in the least — loved them — and had an adorable kitten named for an apostle. Dr. Craig had given him to her.

“You are working too hard, are n’t you?” Sebastian said when they were side by side on the bench. “But school’s nearly out.”

“Nearly. Just a few days more, thank fortune!”

“And then you are going somewhere — for the change — and a little pleasure?” Sebastian held Georgia’s small black-gloved hand in both of her larger, firmer ones. What a pretty girl Sebastian must have been when she, too, was having “a little pleasure,” and when the gay light that sometimes flashed in her eyes was always there, and her thin, clear-cut face was not written all over with those fine wrinkles!

“There’s nowhere to go,” Georgia was saying. “I could n’t bear it alone, anywhere. And my

friend, Miss Pell, has just got herself engaged, and is going to her aunt in Boston for a visit, and then coming back here to — prepare.” Quite a little scorn curled her lip involuntarily as she came out with that “prepare.” “And visiting — now — I could n’t stand.”

“Really! Just got herself engaged!” Sebastian repeated. “Is that the new way, for young women to — do it?”

“Oh, dear, no! I should n’t have put it that way. Theodosia has been dear about it, and quite mediæval in her behavior, and awfully in love. He’s a dear, too, — Superintendent of the Boys’ Club.”

“Really!” Sebastian exclaimed again, faintly pink with all the excitement. “Mr. Wedgwood. I know him well. He’s often here when the boys are ill. Full of his jokes, and yet serious-minded. He always sits in the chapel a minute either going or coming.”

“Oh, he’s very nice,” Georgia reasserted. “And they’re to be married in the fall, and then live down in the flats near the Club.”

This time Sebastian made no exclamation over Theodosia’s fortunes. She was silent a moment, looking down at Georgia’s hand and patting it absently. A pair of pigeons had flown over the wall and pecked struttingly among the bricks close to her black skirt. Then she looked up and smiled remotely into Georgia’s eyes.

“You — must be a good girl and please your

mother, and please God," she said softly. "You must let yourself — get engaged — whatever is the way they do it now — and be happy, my dear!"

A pretty cure for a heartache, to put a knife into the tenderest spot! Georgia's eyes filled and brimmed. Sebastian clasped closer that limp little black-gloved hand.

"Your dear mother — the very last night she was here — talked to me about you. I went in with her digitalis — late. She had been praying, she said, and was so rested. And would I listen a minute? There was something that troubled." Oh, those things that trouble at the end, that were whispered through Sebastian's ugly cap! "And I listened, my dear. God bless her!" A large tear splashed down Georgia's cheek into her lap. "Shall I go on now, dear?"

"All — now, please — darling!" Tight clasp of the small hand around Sebastian's.

"And it was your aloneness, your future, that troubled. Her own heart had been broken. To ease its ache and to spare you the same bitterness, she had tried to — to take your life out of God's hands and shape it her way. The dear woman! God understood. And now she saw the — the true way — that love, with all its chances, is the true way, the free way. All the great splendid Woman Movement you're a part of must go on, but not without the — Sanctities. Such a beautiful word for almost a last word! Is n't it, dear! And in the deep middle

drawer of her desk at home — there were the letters for you. They would show you what she had denied you. And you were not to be afraid.”

Abraham on the wall, feeling the noon instinct, made himself longitudinal for a moment, leaped down, and trotted kitchenward. The pigeons scattered. Twelve o'clock struck ponderously, evenly, from the City Hall tower three blocks away. Then airily the Angelus swung in from the Holy Angels up Lime Street. Sebastian stood up to pray. Upstairs in the third story, an old man in a bright blue bathrobe leaned out of the sunny window and looked at the vigorous green of the maples, then down at the girl in black on the bench in the yard. She was wiping her eyes. What under the sun had she to cry about! Oh, to be young again and have one more chance at life!

The girl wiping her eyes was having her first chance at life. One of the two edges of the heartache — the deeper, sharper one — she was smoothing quite away with that small black-bordered handkerchief. By that time, the long silver swing of the Angelus was ending. Sebastian unfolded her praying hands and turned.

“Did she really say — all that — my brave, brave mother?”

“All that, my dear. And that you were n't to be afraid. And then to me — even then with that smile in her eyes — like your eyes for all the world — ‘But *we* know — we old women, don't we, Sister?

— that there's no question about the rights of women: it's the Man Question.' Queer things for me, a nun, to be saying to you, child."

"Luminous, luminous things, Sister."

"But then, you see, anyhow, my dear," — and Sebastian began to laugh at her own joke, — "as I always tell Dr. Craig, we nuns were the first really free women."

Georgia, for some reason, flamed softly at the joke, and then, with sudden irrelevance, asked news of the joy-riders, Annamae and Kathleen. They were both better, in every way, poor children, Sebastian said, but there would be scars — less beautiful faces, perhaps, but more beautiful souls. Had Georgia ever thought of it, that a scar was sometimes the wrong side of a beautiful healing of the spirit? And by that time they were through the corridor, and out on the sunny front steps of the big hospital, where a Ford was backing up with a load of flowers, and a big boy in overalls was beginning to unload. It was Riley — recognizing her amazedly, smiling widely, grabbing off his hat frantically, and standing at attention, keeping it off.

But Riley was too much absorbed in hats off to women to tell her what was on his lips to tell her the minute she had turned the corner. That she did not know until, on arriving somewhat wearily at the top of the fourth flight in the Lynton, she saw the white corner of an envelope sticking out from under the door. Something important — too



important to have been trusted to the chance of her opening the mail-box below, and not too far gone to be pulled out and read before opening the door.

It was Craig's business envelope, "Miss Frame," scrawled hastily in his writing. Inside was a prescription blank — that held out no promises. It said: —

I've failed — again. Little Joy died last night.

CRAIG.

At the very moment when she sank down on the top step with fluttering heart and paper, the door opposite her door opened, and a pale, old, limp Mrs. Pretty stood amazed on the threshold, suit-case in hand.

"Land o' love, Miss Frame! Something else happened? Not a smitch of color in your face. I says t' Annamae just last night you was workin' too hard."

"It's not that, Mrs. Pretty. It ought n't to upset me so. But my friend's little boy has died. It's just the shock of it. And such a dear little boy!"

Mrs. Pretty's face dropped and hardened. "I say, thank God, it ain't a girl! Looks to me like, Miss Frame, it would n't be such a loss if all the men was t' die, an' just leave the earth to the wimmin. No more conscience than — than roosters! An' when you're up to it, you an' Miss Pell, I just want to go into your Cause — or whatever you call



it — tooth and nail. I says t' Annamae just as soon as she'd got her senses, I says, 'Look at Miss Frame an' Miss Pell. Ef you an' Katie Mooney was like them, holdin' the men off, you and her would n't be layin' here to-day with every smitch of you black an' blue, let alone what's broken.' An' Annamae, she says, 'That's right, mommer.' "

"Poor dears! Give them my love," Georgia said, rising and feeling for her key. "And just as soon as — things stop happening, I'm going over to see them and take them something good."

The Pretty interlude had lost her the one o'clock car to the Center. The next was at two. Between the bright new glory of Sebastian's luminous things, and the black shadow of Craig's news, her thoughts blurred. It was a hot day, but the apartment was dark and cool. Theodosia was off wage investigating with Mr. Wedgwood. Matrimony was to put no curb on her freedom.

There was that blue *crêpe de chine*, never ripped to go to the dyer's. She sat down on the window-seat where she could watch the City Hall clock and snipped and snipped. What would Linda be doing? Would it be very dreadful out in the shabby gray house where the little boy had died? Would the children all be hushed and the house dark? Would Mr. Leaf be bringing flowers, and would his eyes trouble her with their melancholy? The scissors slipped and cut a jagged tear in the seam she was

ripping. Would Craig come — while she was there? Darling, darling — Sebastian! And there was just time for a glass of milk and some crackers before that two o'clock car. And the old piano had never been played on since it came, never once. And now her mother had sent word for her not to be afraid — ever — of anything. She could get on without the crackers and milk, but not without the piano's voice in the stillness. The whole floor to herself! And there was that Dvorák Humoresque! Oh, dear, how it sang — just as it used to sing! How sweet life was — how sweet pain! And if Howard Craig should be there! It was time to go or she should miss that two o'clock trolley. If Howard Craig were there, what should she do!

But she saw at once, when she turned off from the main road to the unmacadamized road to the Corners, that there was nothing dreadful about the shabby gray house ahead there in the trees. It was all a part of the bright, hot afternoon landscape. And nearer she could see that all the windows were wide open as usual, except in the nursery, and there the shades were half drawn just as always for Joy's afternoon nap. Nearer still, Skip, the white-eyed dog, came running out to meet her; and through the sagging gate she could see no white tulle floating out from the front door. Corilla and Adelaide were on the grass picking lapfuls of white clovers with long stems. They came running to her with cries of joy only a key or two lower than usual.

"Oh! We're so glad. Mother'll be too," Corilla poured out, with a lingering hug. "You know about little Joy, don't you? Are n't you glad?"

"He'll wake up in heaven — wif favver — all well," explained Adelaide between two kisses.

"We're getting clovers for a garland, so people will know he's better," Corilla went on. "Can you help after you see mother? It takes a good many, and Jack and Carl are working at Mr. Leaf's."

Georgia bent down and kissed them again. "Of course I can help," she said, "if you'll show me how, lammies."

And then she went on up the porch steps and, without knocking, into the wide hall with the bowl of June roses on the table. Out through the back door, she could see Jack's chickens white in the sun, Carl's hotbeds wide-open, then Mr. Leaf's hot shimmery fields, and back of all the shimmery hills. There was no one downstairs. And it was not until she reached the landing, halfway up, where the stairs turned, that she saw any one. Then it was Linda, sitting on the deep ledge of the window just inside the nursery door. In spite of the shaded light, there was sewing in her lap — a child's white garment — and on her finger a red celluloid thimble. But she was not sewing. She was leaning against the window with her eyes closed, a faint smile on her lips. The light hot breeze moved the loosened hair around her ears and on her brow. It would have been easier to speak if she had been weeping.

But she herself made it quite easy as Georgia came on softly, hesitating a little. She opened her eyes at once to realities, however remote had been her thought, and gathering up her sewing, stood in the doorway. The faint smile had changed into a very definite, strange little smile. And she held out the hand with the red thimble on it.

"Do you know it, Georgia?" she said. "My baby is dead. *My* baby! What have you ever done as — big as that?"

"Nothing, my dearest! Only little, little things!" The hand of the red thimble seemed to have lost its clasp; then it let hers do the clasping.

"You poor, poor woman! You've never been rich enough — to lose. So you cannot understand."

"Some day — some day — perhaps God will — let me understand."

"You cannot teach women things, you girls you, — till you do understand. How dare you?"

"Oh, I've stopped just daring, dear! Quite stopped. Truly I have!" The morning's unshed tears began to brim. "May n't I even see your baby?"

Then Linda's arms went round her close and long.

"You poor dear!" she said at last, looking up with a vestige of her old smile and with tears on her cheeks. "You have n't known! Of course you shall see him, my sweet, sweet boy! And then you'll stay till to-morrow. If I'd only had a sister or two! And you see he's quite comfortable now, poor little

chap! Don't you know I told you that somehow I knew — I *knew* — that he was going to be much better. And this is — much better!" And she stopped at the cribside and, leaning down, settled more firmly in his small hand the little red engine. Most beloved of all toys had been the little red engine.

"And do you know what I was thinking, sitting there in the window when you came? It came over me — all of a sudden — that Carl, my husband — my sweetheart — is sorry — and ashamed, and that's why he's begged God to take little Joy — and right the wrong. And so — I'm willing."

Somewhere around midnight she heard the motor-horn. Would n't she know it anywhere, even in the courts of heaven, that challenging motor-horn that had heralded him in the sad hospital days last fall, and that ever since had soared and sung to her above all the city noises, and set her heart beating wildly? Now it was faint and far away, probably turning the sharp corner from the Center road into the Corners road.

She sprang up and leaned out of the window. Linda had sent her up to bed, but she had not undressed, and had lain wide awake staring into the dark of the room, then out at the paler dark of the sky above the hills. The car was rapidly coming nearer — soft whirring, then a band of light across the road, then two great white lights turning in at



the sagging gate. She drew quickly back into the shadow. Then whirring in a lower key — then dead stop.

Then his darling voice saying low to Cox, "Come about eight. Tell Fow just to say I'm out of town for the night."

Then soft whirring again lost in his voice saying to Linda at the open door just below, "Of course I'm going to stay all night. Late getting away from the hospital. Always wanted to sleep out here in the Gloucester hammock under the pines. Fearfully hot in town. You must get some rest. Miss Frame here?"

"Thank God, yes! Such a comfort to have her. She's a dear!"

"She's got courage — lots of it. Lean on her. Now you rest. Take two of the white tablets I gave you — and sleep. Don't give me a thought — unless you need me."

"Oh, you good man! You good, good man!"

Then a silence till the hammock creaked out under the pines.

Georgia leaned far out again, listening for his breathing. Her cheeks glowed in spite of the wind that blew cool up from the thickets of wild grape. A light in the old gray farmhouse, off to the east, went out.

But it was not until the sky changed, and the whole world twittered and fluted with bird notes, that she let herself go down to waken him. And he,



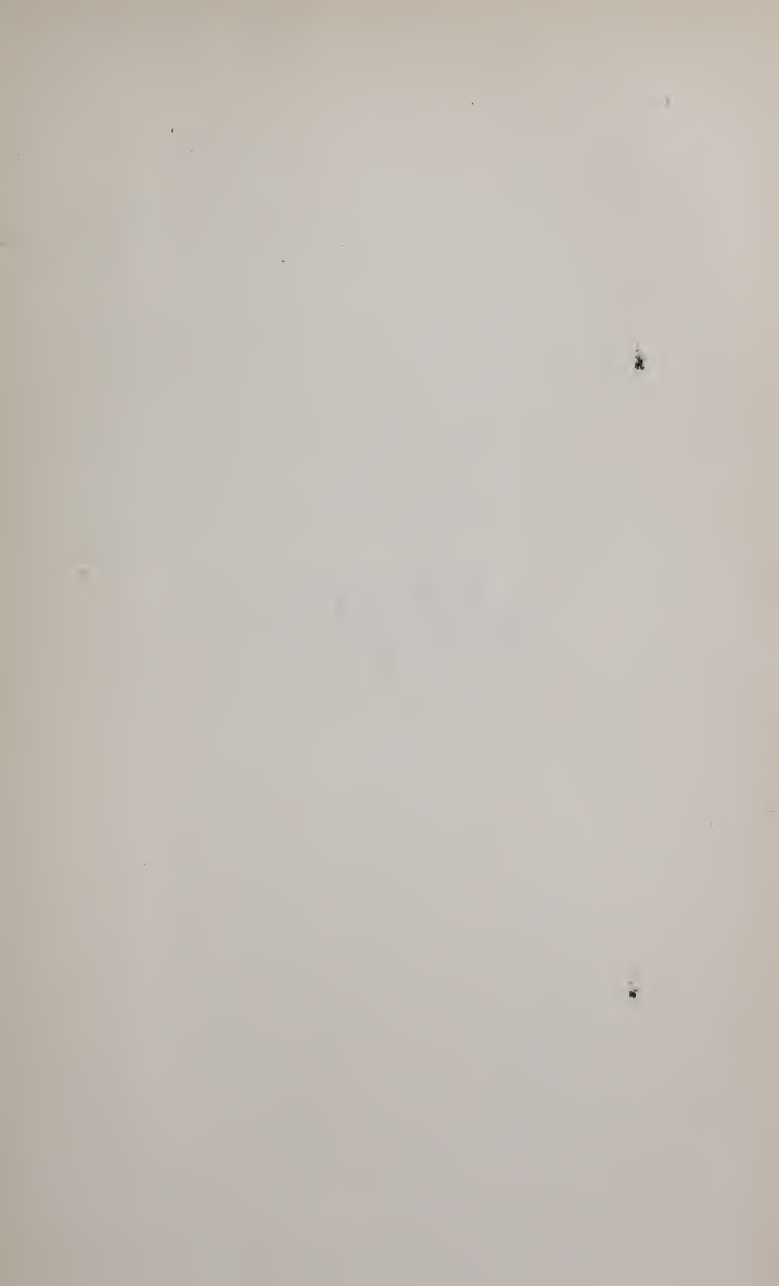
quite wide awake, thought that her coming across the grass and parting the boughs of the pines was only the wind of the morning. It was not until she leaned over and lightly touched his hair that he opened his eyes and knew.

“Dearest!” he hesitated, amazedly, softly, springing to his feet, “what has brought *you to me?*”

Even in the shadow he could see the blithe line curving the corners of her mouth.

“It’s the New Woman in me,” she said.

THE END



**The Riverside Press**  
**CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS**  
**U . S . A**











BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 08709 251 4

